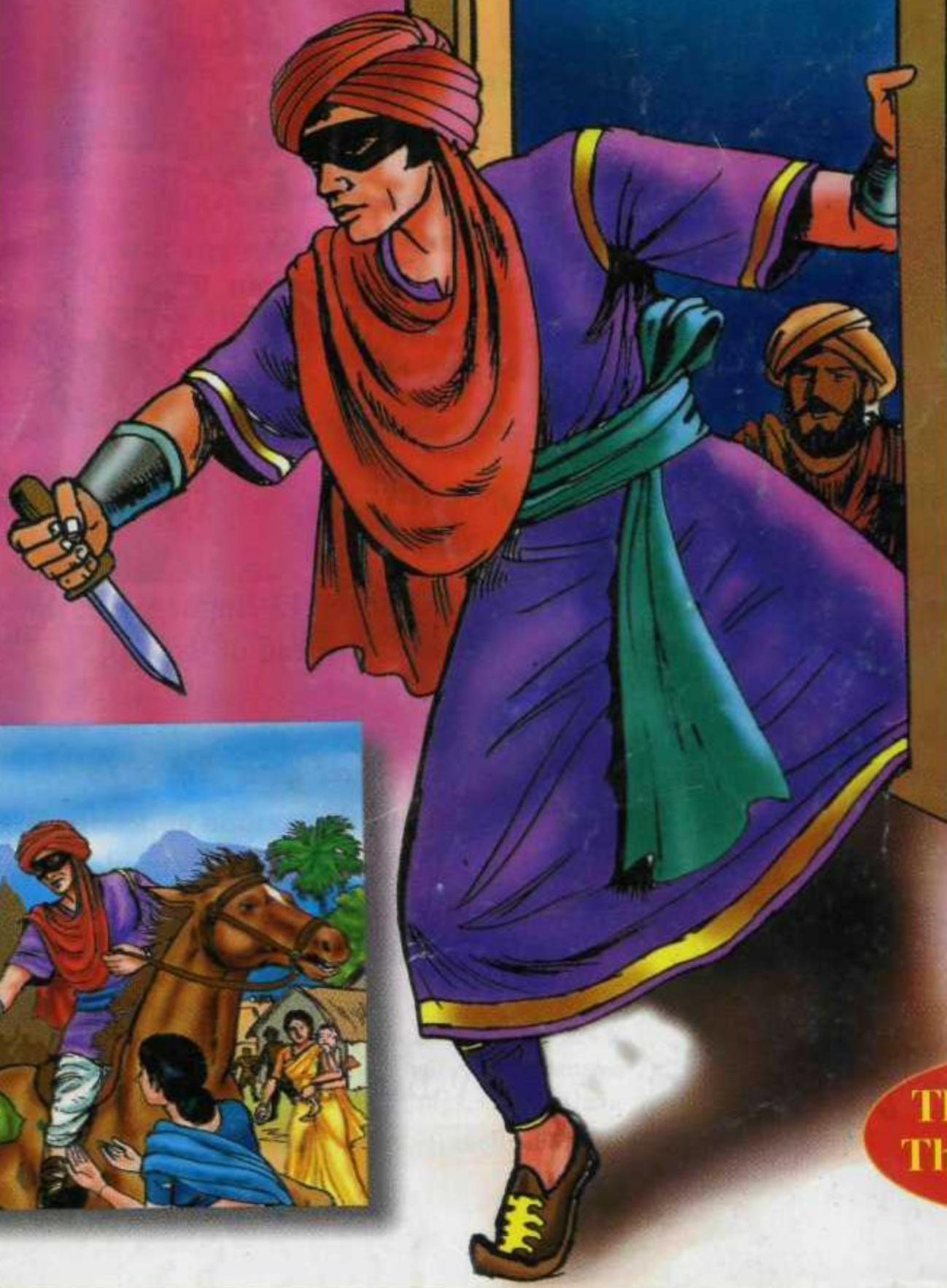
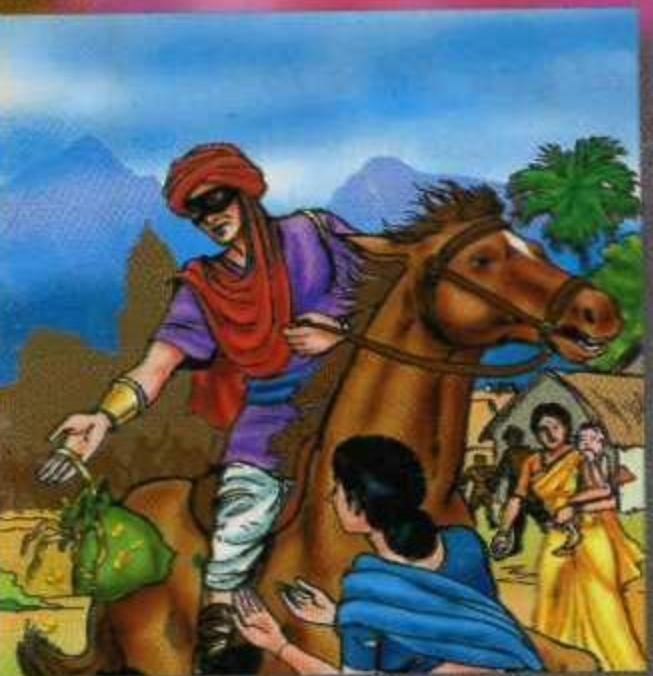


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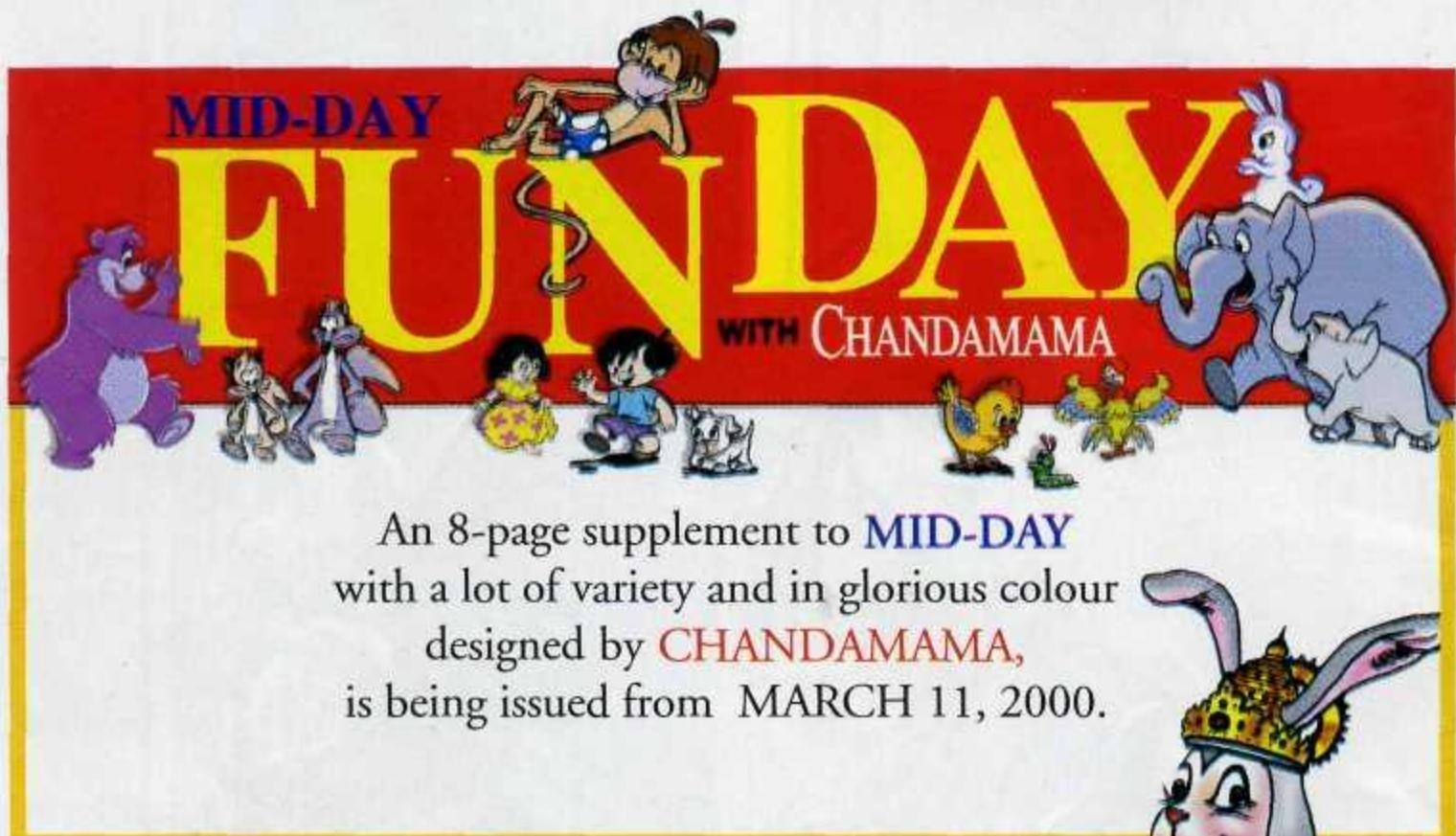
# CHANDAMAMA



The Golden  
Throne (Page 1)



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# CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 30

May 2000

No. 5

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### HIGHLIGHTS

#### The Golden Throne



#### The Saga of India



#### Unsolved Mysteries



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## NEW HORIZONS BEFORE *CHANDAMAMA*

*Chandamama* had a dream. And that was to make all the children of India dream of a future in a united way, to learn about their past in a united way. If a child is confident of his past and optimistic about his future, he will know how to take care of his present.

Over a little more than half a century, *Chandamama* did succeed to a certain degree in achieving this goal. Through twelve different Indian languages, including Sanskrit and English, *Chandamama* became a dear companion of a few million young readers. Today it steps into yet another glorious phase of its life — through a popular as well as prestigious publication, the MID-DAY of Bombay, when it will add to its world of readership a budding and bright publication. Every Saturday MID-DAY will carry an 8-page supplement : *FUNDAY with CHANDAMAMA*.

What is more, your magazine has entered the vast Internet world and the first phase of its adventure has received numerous tributes. It is available at [goyogi.com](http://goyogi.com).

*Chandamama* strives to bring education to children not through examinations, but through examples, not through tears but through smiles. It tells them about their great past not through drab lessons in history, but through stories and legends. In this new phase of its mission, it aspires to reach new heights. It will not rest satisfied, but will itself grow farther and will share its growing experience with its ever-expanding readership and viewers.

# NEWS FLASH

## THE HIMALAYA IS MELTING!

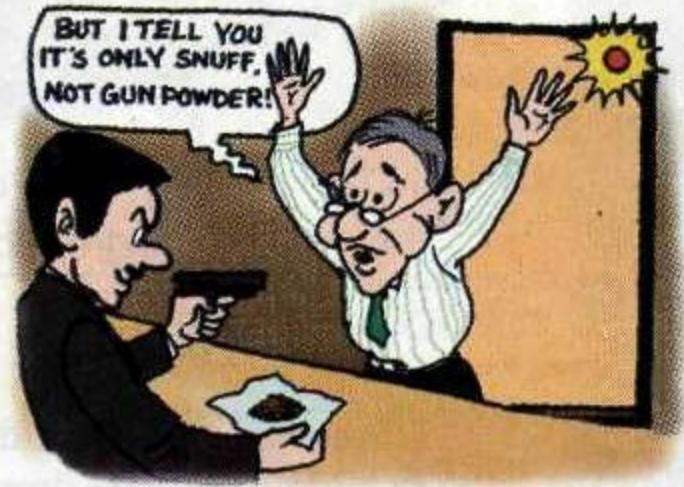
Thanks to the heat man is discharging into space, the carbon dioxide and the greenhouse gas he is



sending upwards, colossal glaciers in the higher reaches of the Himalayas have begun to melt down. Last year, the river Sindhu recorded a higher level of water than before. The World Watch Institute has warned that unless steps are taken to check the damage man is doing to the atmosphere, vast areas at the foot of the Himalayan range may be washed away.

## BAD NEWS FOR HIJACKERS

A new scanning machine will show everything a passenger is carrying, from drugs to explosives, however carefully he or she may hide the stuff in his or her



clothes. In other words, it will find out what metal detectors cannot.

## GOOD NEWS FOR THE DEAF

Children born deaf can develop the capability to hear in the near future.



British scientists have invented a tiny ear which can be fixed inside the infant's ears. It cannot be seen. It can work with a wee little battery which can be recharged by rubbing one's ears. This is a device quite different from the common hearing aid.



# BORN

# THIS MONTH

The 7th of May happens to be the birthday of modern India's most celebrated poet, Rabindranath Tagore, born in Calcutta in 1861. His father, Devendranath Tagore, was a benevolent aristocrat.

Rabindranath began to write at an early age. By the time he completed twenty years of age, his genius was recognised by no less a person than Bankim Chandra, the great novelist and author of *Bande Mataram*, our national song.

Rabindranath, though famous all over the world as a poet, was also a novelist, short story writer, and essayist of equal merit. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his collection of poems *Gitanjali*, which he had translated into English himself.

He was a sincere patriot. When Sri Aurobindo, "the prophet of Indian Nationalism", was persecuted by the British rulers of India, he wrote an inspiring poem, *Aurobindo! Rabindranath bows to thee!*"

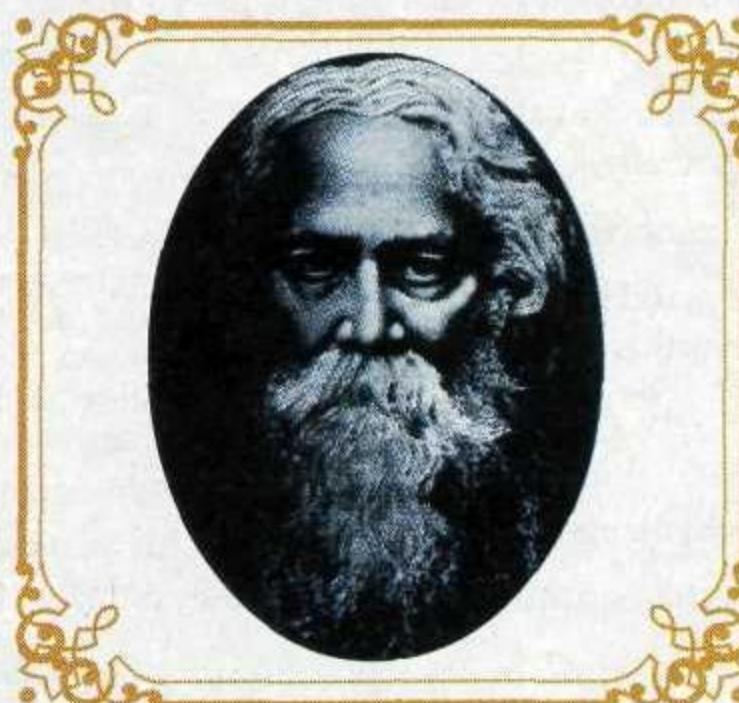
Patriotism led him to found a new university, Visva Bharati at Santiniketan, where emphasis was given to national education and national culture.

He dominated the Bengali literary scene more than anybody else. He also was a great influence on Indian literature and culture. He died on the 7th of August 1941.

In his book *Creative Unity*, Tagore says : An immense amount of our

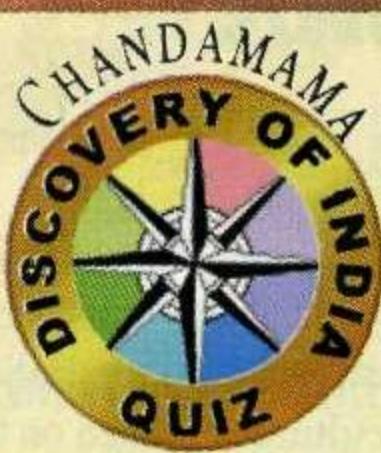
activity is engaged in making images, not for serving any useful purpose or formulating rational propositions, but for giving varied responses to the varied touches of this reality. In this image-making, the child creates his own world in answer to the world

in which he finds himself. The child in us finds glimpses of his eternal playmate from behind the veil of things, as Proteus rising from the sea, or Triton blowing his wreathed horn. And the playmate is the Reality that makes it possible for the child to find delight in activities which do not inform or bring assistance but merely express. There is an image making joy in the infinite, which inspires in us our joy in imagining.



## RABINDRANATH TAGORE





## Answers to April Quiz

1. Harischandra, Chandramati, Kasi.
2. a. Sri Krishna married Rukmini, the princess of Vidarbha.  
b. Balabhadra married Revati, the princess of Kusasthali.
- c. Nala was the King of Nisadha.
- d. Sage Markandeya did his tapasya at Pushpabhadratirtha.
- e. Guha was the King of Sringerapuram.

3. i) *Silappadikaram* by Ilango Adigal.  
ii) Gunadhyā, the author of *Brihatkatha*.  
iii) In the *Mahabharata* (Vana Parva)  
iv) Kamban and Tulsidas.  
v) Charaka.

Note: 1. None of the entries for the February Quiz was either all correct or complete.

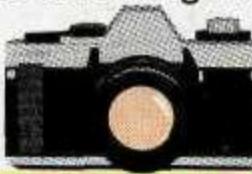
2. In some cases, the comment on the quotations was missing.

3. Participants are requested to follow the rules stipulated along with the Quiz to have their entries considered for prizes.

# Creative Contests

## CHANDAMAMA INVITES ITS READERS

to participate in creative exercises of their imaginative-ness and quest in the following fields.



## PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

1. For the Photo-caption contest page, budding photographers can send a pair of pictures, both related to each other in some way. The photographer's own explanation of the relationship must accompany the submission.

For the selected photographs (pair), the reward is Rs. 500.

Photos can be submitted any time.



2. Readers can submit an anecdote or an experience of their own or a story (old or new) which will explain a proverb or a phrase announced by your magazine, in 150-175 words. Please remember that your submission must have a story element in it, but not the original story from which the proverb is derived.

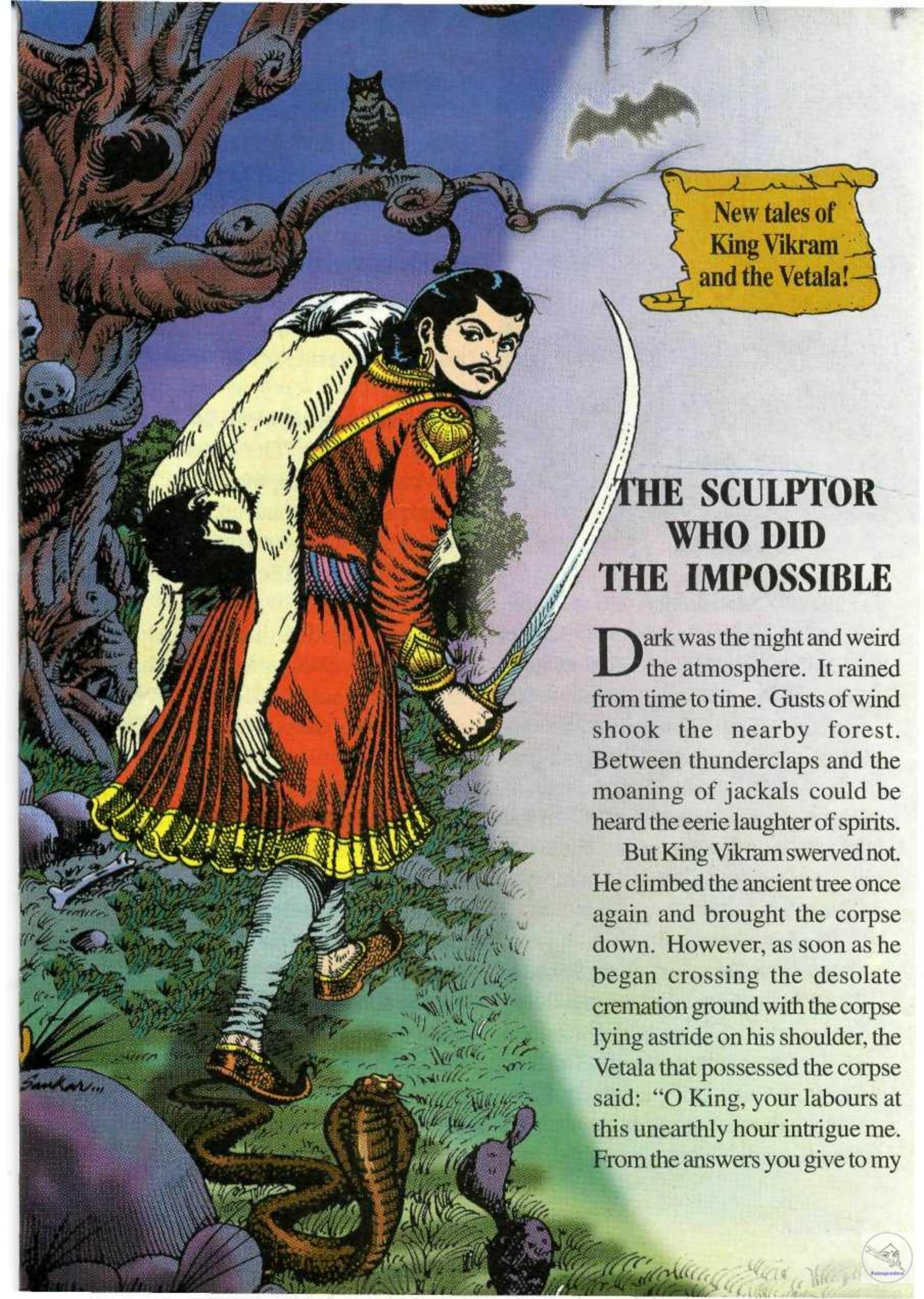
**The proverb for this month is:  
"Penny wise, Pound foolish"**

For the selected submission, a reward of Rs. 500 will be given.

Submissions must reach by the end of May 2000 and the winning piece will be published in the July 2000 issue.

Address your entries to:  
CHANDAMAMA CREATIVE CONTESTS,  
CHANDAMAMA BUILDING, VADAPALANI, CHENNAI-600026.





New tales of  
King Vikram  
and the Vetala!

## THE SCULPTOR WHO DID THE IMPOSSIBLE

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: "O King, your labours at this unearthly hour intrigue me. From the answers you give to my



riddles, I presume that you are wise. At the same time I feel you are rather foolish. Maybe you have two selves in yourself — one wise and the other foolish. Perhaps, sometimes the wise self dominates your personality, at other times your foolish self dominates it. Well, it can happen with several sensible people. Let me cite an instance. Pay attention to it; that should bring you some relief."

The Vetala went on:

Long ago, the Kingdom of Chakravak was ruled by King Sasankadev. His daughter, Princess Shampalata was as beautiful as a nymph. But hardly anybody knew about it because in those days and in that part of the world, girls of the royal

families never appeared in public.

One day while the princess was talking to her father, an idea flashed in the king's mind. As years would pass, like everything else, the beauty of the princess, too, would change. Nobody would ever know that such a beauty had once lived this earth. Would there be any sculptor who could carve a figure in marble of his charming daughter?

He discussed his idea with the queen and the minister. The question was, how could any sculptor create a figure of the princess without taking a look at her? But there was no question of the princess appearing before any sculptor as a model!

It was decided that the sculptors who would volunteer to try their hands at the project would be given a description of the princess by her chief maid. After the sculptors created the figures according to the description, the king and queen would judge which of them resembled the princess most. The creator of that sculpture would then be made the chief sculptor of the kingdom and occupy a high position in the royal court.

The announcement was duly made and a number of sculptors gathered on the appointed day to listen to the maid's description of the princess. Thereafter, they engaged themselves in giving shape to their visions of the princess on blocks



of marble. After a few months the figures were ready and were carried into the queen's apartments in the palace. The king, the queen, and a few of their confidants looked at them, but rejected all of them!

Once again the announcement was made, calling upon new hands to participate in the project.

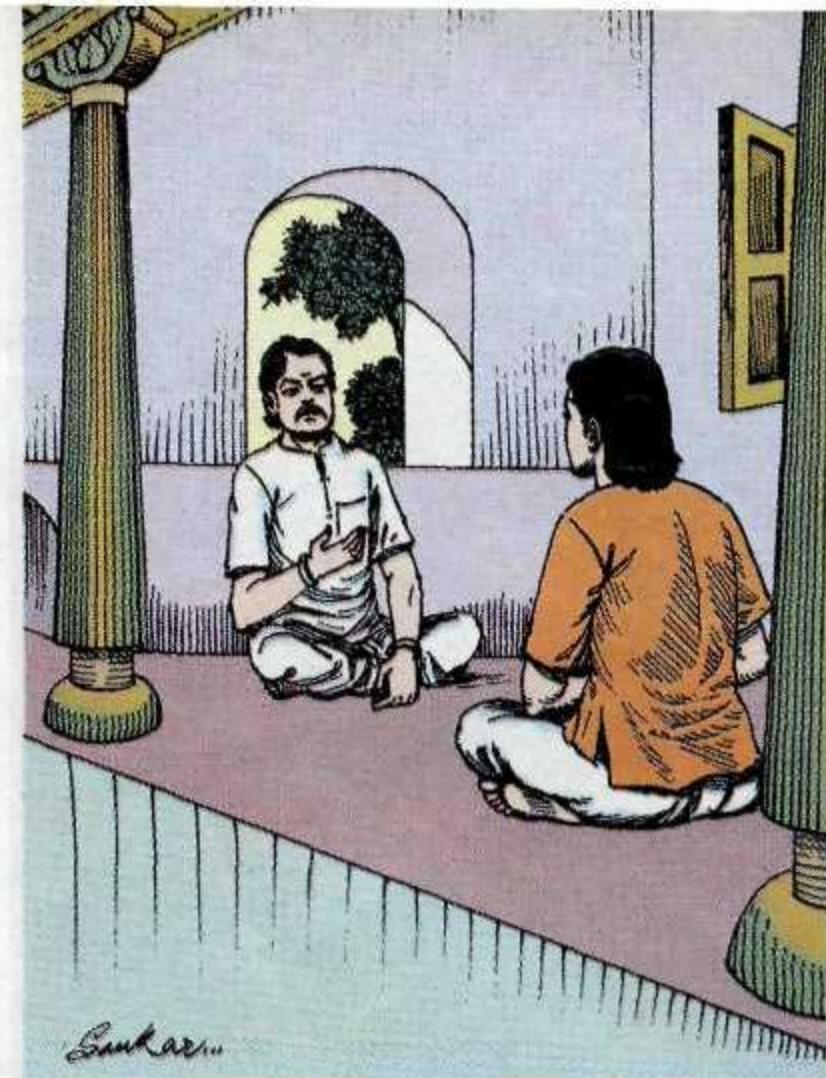
In a frontier village of the kingdom of Chakravak lived an artist named Rajshekhar. His son, Viraj, was a highly talented sculptor. He was still in the process of learning the art from a great sculptor who belonged to the neighbouring kingdom of Vajrapur. The King of Vajrapur was a great lover of all kinds of art and he patronised all budding artists.

Viraj was on a visit to his village when he heard the king's announcement.

"Is it at all possible to carve someone's figure by only listening to a description of the person?" Viraj wondered.

"My son, it is possible in principle. There are more than one way to do that. One can develop an inner vision through Yoga; one can see a person through a wall or a screen through tantra. A third way is to take the help of some supernatural beings," said Rajshekhar.

"Father, I'm neither a yogi nor a tantrik. But I have a desire to become

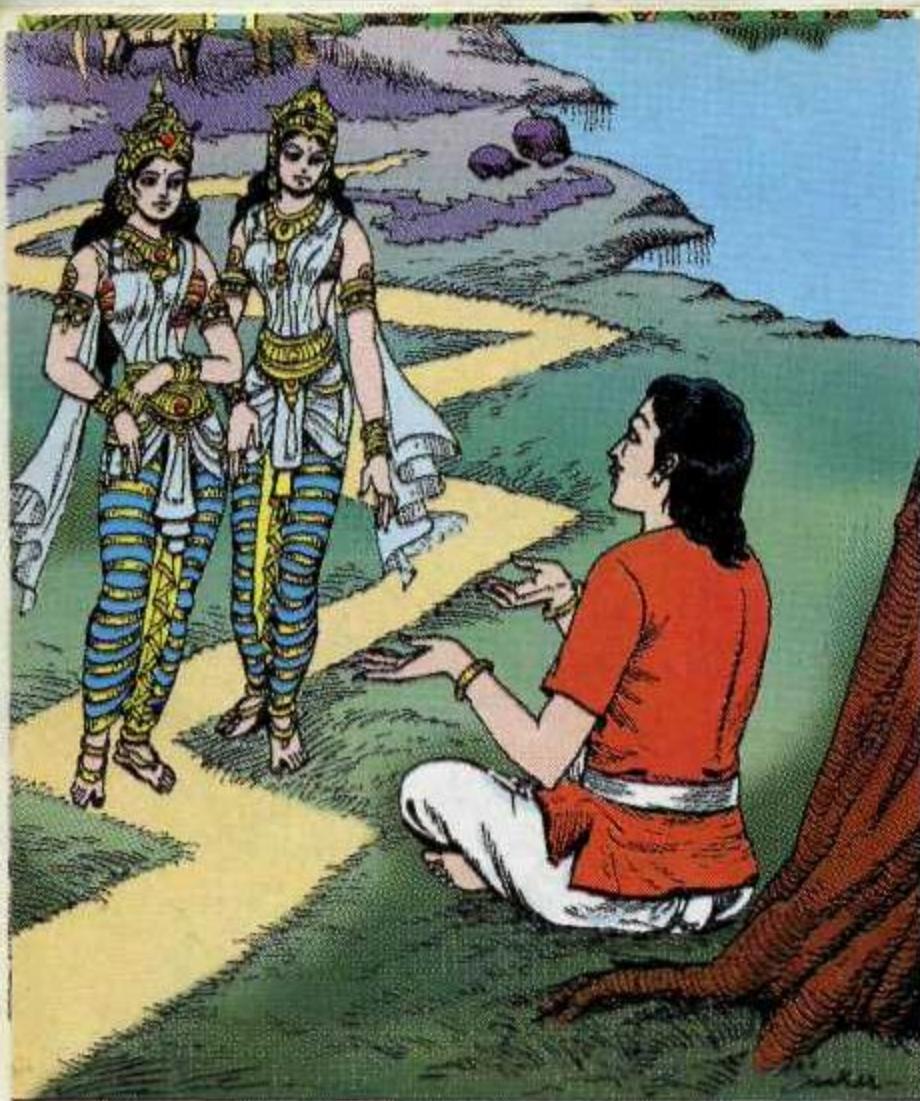


the chief sculptor of our kingdom. I don't know how and where to find any supernatural being who can help me to create an exact figure of the princess," said Viraj.

"I can tell you where to meet them. This, indeed, is a secret. Not far from our village, as you know, there is the forest Kanakaranya, around the lake Kanaka. On full-moon nights the Yakshis descend on the banks of the lake and play hide-and-seek. If you can somehow please any of them, your mission can be accomplished," informed Rajshekhar.

The full-moon night was only two days away. Viraj set out for the Kanakaranya forest in the afternoon on the day preceding the night and reached





the lake Kanaka in the evening. He sat down under a tree and waited for his opportunity.

The full moon shone on the lake and the trees. The atmosphere was calm and fragrant with numerous forest flowers. Suddenly, Viraj heard a sweet giggle. He followed the sound and saw two beautiful damsels coming towards him.

He greeted them with folded hands.

"How dare you, a human being, tarry here at night? Aren't you afraid of wild animals and giants?" asked one of the damsels.

It was not difficult for Viraj to guess that they were Yakshis.

"O kind-hearted Devis! I am not afraid of anything because I know that

you will protect me from any danger," said Viraj.

"Do you have so much faith in us?" they asked. "Good. But what brings you here at this hour?"

Viraj told them the reason for his presence there and waiting for them. They were amused, but Viraj could feel that they had nothing but sympathy for him.

"Look here, young man, it is not possible to carve anyone's figure without seeing the person. But we will help you make the impossible possible, provided you agree to carve our figures, too, in stone," said the Yakshis.

"I shall deem it my good fortune to carve your images," said Viraj.

"Thanks," said one of the Yakshis. "My name is Chanchala and my friend's name is Chapala. You can fix your eyes on Chapala and see what happens."

As Viraj kept looking at Chapala, her appearance began to change. In a moment she became a different person.

"The figure Chapala has assumed is that of the princess. You can begin carving the image looking at her," advised Chanchala.

"O Devi, I don't have a chunk of marble here," said Viraj. "I did not bring my implements either," he added.

"Here it is!" was Chanchala's response. Viraj was amazed to find a block of marble near him. He also saw a casket full of the necessary



implements.

Viraj at once began his work. But Chanchala observed: "This is too slow a process. Wait, I'll give speed to your instruments."

Next moment Viraj saw himself working ten times faster. The figure was made in no time.

"Excellent!" exclaimed the two Yakshis. "Come here on the next full-moon night and fulfil your promise to us."

"I shall, O Devis, but how am I to carry this stone sculpture to the palace of King Sasankadev," said Viraj.

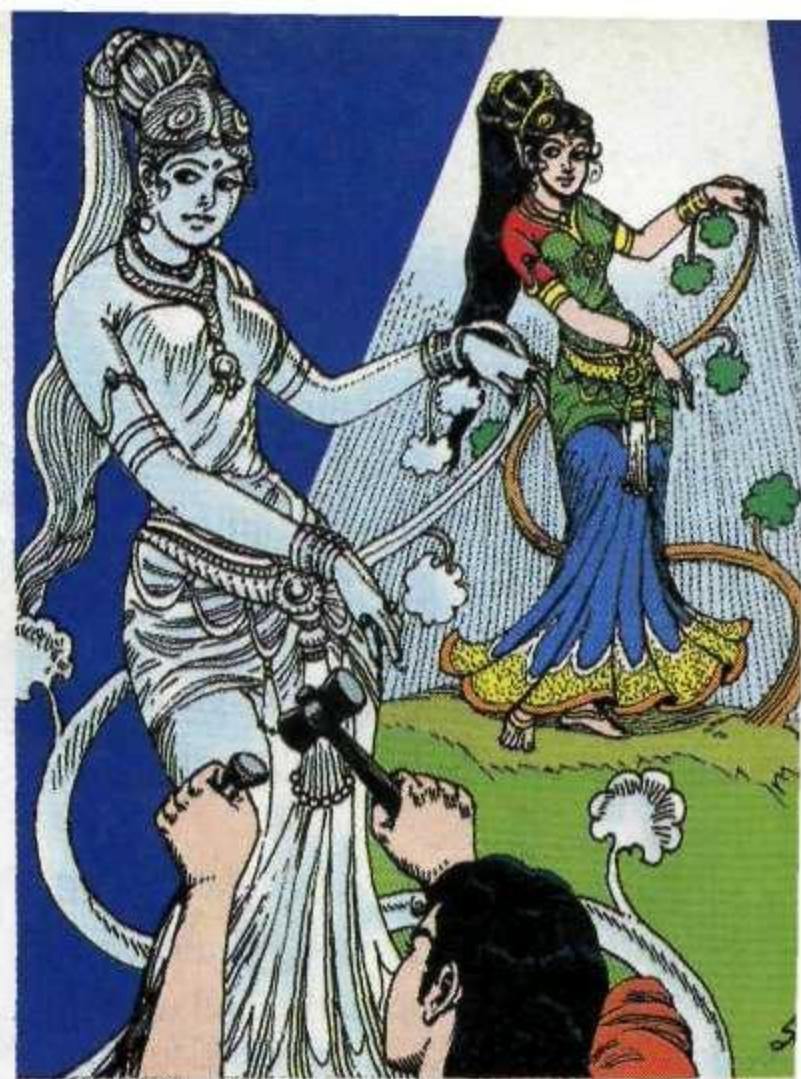
"Shut your eyes," commanded Chanchala.

Viraj did so — and felt a strange sensation. As if he was being carried through the sky.

When he opened his eyes, he saw himself right in front of the palace, along with the sculpture.

The king was duly informed of his presence. The image was taken inside. It was found to be an exact portrayal of the princess. "Am I looking at a mirror?" exclaimed the happy princess.

The king called Viraj to his presence and praised his work. He said: "We will make you the chief sculptor of our kingdom and a courtier. But, before that, you have to carve another image — of my wife's younger sister, Manjula. She has seen my daughter's image and wishes to have one made of herself."



"Your Majesty, can a subject ever disobey his king? But allow me to go home now. I feel tired, and I need some rest," said Viraj.

"All right," agreed the king, certain that Viraj would oblige him later.

But Viraj never returned to the palace. Not only that. He left the kingdom and went away to the neighbouring kingdom of Vajrapur. His parents also joined him.

The Vetala paused for a moment and then in a voice that was challenging, demanded of King Vikram, "O King, wasn't it foolish of Viraj to reject the position offered by the king? Just as he made the image of the princess, he could have made one of Manjula's, too. Why didn't he do that? Why did he go





*A man's greatness is of no value if it is like the tallness of a palm tree which gives no shade and its fruit, hanging too height, cannot be plucked easily.*

— Kabir

away to another country, Vajrapur, instead of enjoying his own king's patronage? Did he not promise the king to carve Manjula's figure? O King, answer me if you can. Should you keep mum though you may know the answers, your head would roll off your neck!"

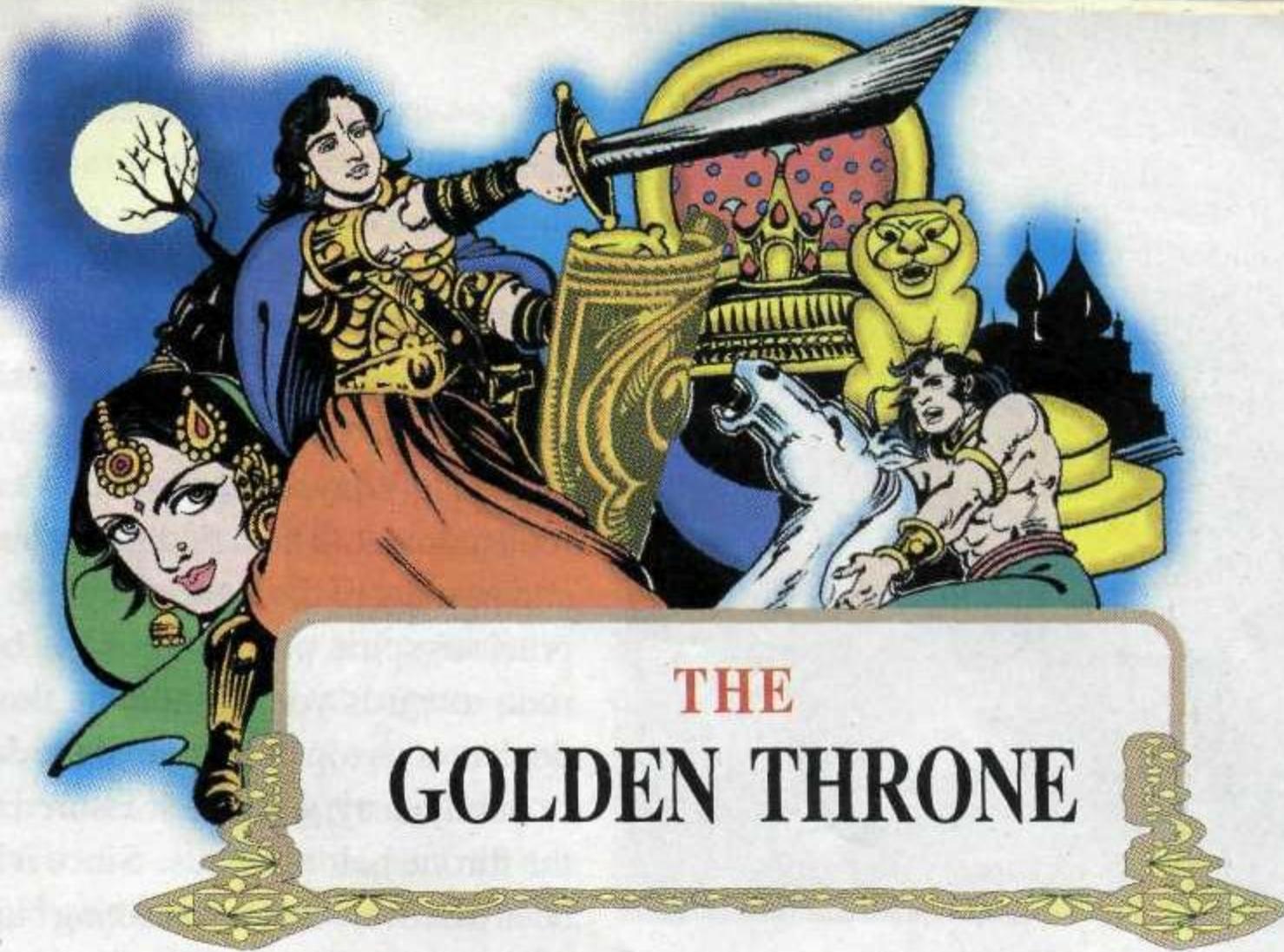
Answered King Vikram without the least delay: "An artist's greatest hope is an art-lover's sympathy and wisdom. King Sasankadev was a fool to expect that somebody could carve an image of his daughter without taking a look at her. It was double foolishness on his part not to show any curiosity regarding Viraj's surprising achievement. How could Viraj make an exact image of his daughter without ever seeing her? This question should become uppermost in one's mind unless one is blunt and dull. Viraj understood the attitude of the

king. If the king ordered to create another image like the one he had done of the princess, even before appointing him as the chief sculptor, he could give similar orders time and again even after giving him the position. Must he run every time to the Yakshis to perform his task? Viraj never promised anything to King Sasankadev. He said that a subject must obey his king. That is why he did not wish to remain his subject and decided to leave Chakravak.

"The King of Vajrapur was a lover and patron of art. That explains why Viraj migrated to that kingdom. It is far better to be recognised as a good artist by people who understood art than to be recognised as the best artist by one who did not understand art."

No sooner had King Vikram concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.





## THE GOLDEN THRONE

*[The story so far: Sridatta, the King of Kaundinya, and Madhavasena, the King of Kalindi, were great friends. Sridatta's son, Prince Vijayadatta, was to marry Princess Srilekha, Madhavasena's daughter. But the wicked King of Champaka, Maralabhupati, proposed not only his equally wicked son Chakrabhupati's marriage with Srilekha, but an invasion of Kaundinya. He also influenced Madhavasena as well as the King of Kunda to join him. Princess Srilekha, however, escaped to Kaundinya. King Sridatta at once performed her marriage with his son Vijayadatta. When Madhavasena learnt of this, his mind changed. He decided to desert Maralabhupati at an opportune moment.]*

*Meanwhile, following a prophecy, Sridatta ordered digging at a spot close to the palace, under the supervision of the royal priest, Sivananda. A terrible looking serpent emerged and put Prince Vijayadatta to a test. The prince passed the test. The snake gave way to a wonderful throne, atop which was carved the image of the dynasty's deity. As, advised by Sivananda, the prince was about to climb the steps of the throne, when a voice asked him to halt.]*

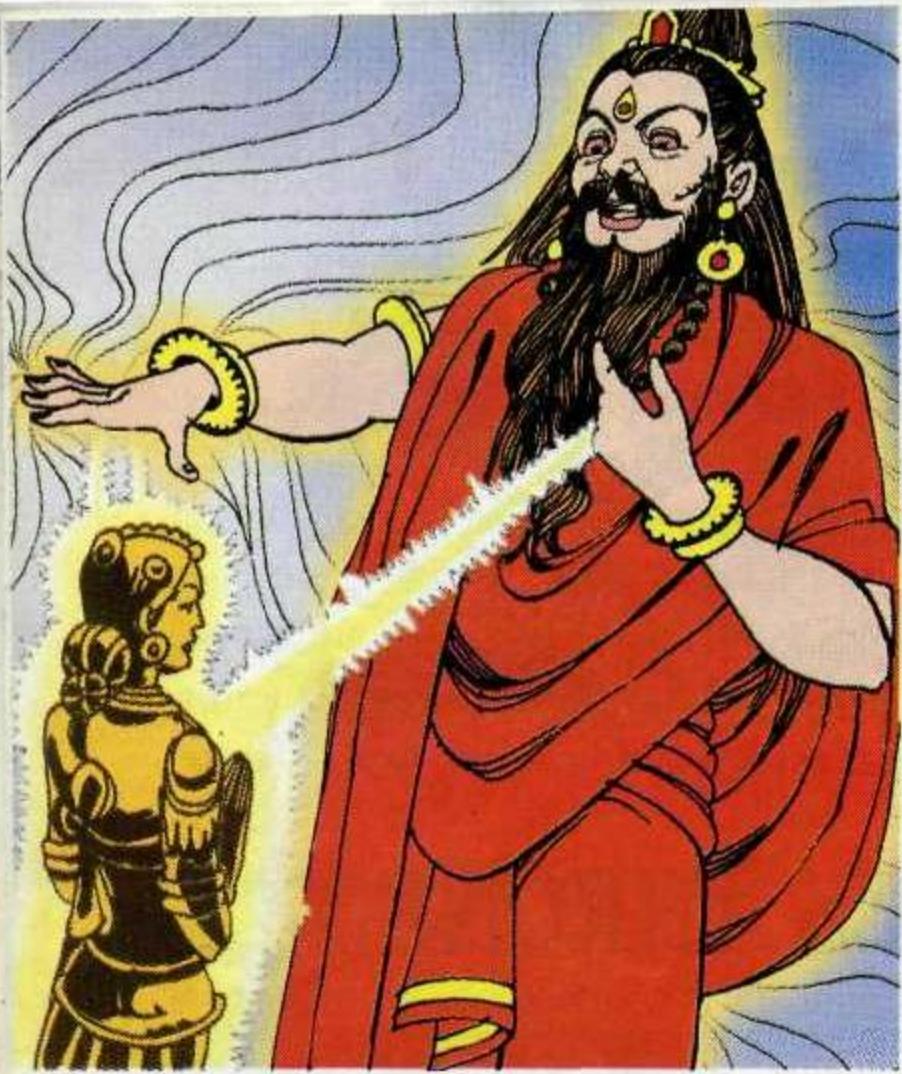
The grand audience hall of the Haihaya kings of Kaundinya was vibrant with the chanting of vedic hymns. Priests, nobles, and the high officials of the kingdom sat or stood in attention.

But the Commander of the army, his

deputies, as well as the ministers were equally alert about a possible attack by the enemy. The army stood vigilant. The citizens, of course, had no reason to suspect that anything was amiss. They were agog with excitement. Such

### 5. A CHALLENGE FROM THE SPIRITS





a festive mood had not been witnessed for many years past. Thousands stood inside and outside the spacious hall.

There was complete silence, except for the chanting of the sacred *mantras*, when Prince Vijayadatta and his wife, Princess Srilekha, were about to place their feet on the first step of the glowing throne.

“Stop, O Prince!” said a clear, firm, but sweet feminine voice.

Surprised, Vijayadda withdrew his foot; so did Princess Srilekha.

The vedic chanting stopped. A thousand brows were raised. All were baffled by this sudden turn of events.

“Who are you? How dare you disturb this auspicious ceremony?”

Prince Vijayadatta demanded in a stern voice.

The answer came from the same feminine voice: “O Prince, I’m the spirit residing in the first figure to the right side of the throne. It was I who had asked you to stop.”

Prince Vijayadatta stood in silence for a moment. Then, folding his hands and bowing to the figure, he said: “O gracious spirit, pardon me if I’ve been rude towards you. Since the throne depicts at its top the figure of the deity of our dynasty, we all felt assured that the throne belongs to us. Since it had been discovered after remaining buried for long, we thought it proper to put it to use. Your unexpected interference, naturally, raises many questions. If I’m not, who then is eligible to sit on this wonderful throne? After satisfying the mysterious serpent’s query, I thought I had qualified myself to occupy it. Was I wrong?”

“O prince, your humility pleases me. I hope you’ll be able to fulfil the expectations of the maker of this throne. I shall try to answer your question,” said the spirit and she began a narration:

“This charming throne, no doubt, belonged to your dynasty, though it lay hidden from human view for some generations. Pouraswata, the greatest monarch to have ever ruled this part of the earth, was childless. He adopted his



nephew, Hayagreeva. Unfortunately Hayagreeva was found to be most incapable, and he made himself a laughing stock. This hurt his guru, Pulinda Bhattaraka, very much. Pulinda loved the young king like his own son and did everything possible to help him. Pulinda also had mastered some supernatural powers. It was he who had this throne made. But he did so secretly. He gathered a huge quantity of gold, diamond, and other gems and employed craftsmen who swore secrecy. Even Hayagreeva did not know it.

“When the making of the throne was completed, Pulinda, applying his supernatural power, infused the three images of *Shalabhanjikas* on your right with spirits of Truth, Righteousness, and Justice. The three images on your left are our supporting powers. They are not as conscious as we are.

“Now, O prince, what is known as *Rajadharma* or the duties of a king, is a set of complex laws. Only he who has the qualities of truth, righteousness, and justice in his character can be an ideal ruler. These qualities are the three pillars of administration leading to the fourth pillar, the king. If the king is weak in character, the three pillars become shaky. At the same time, the three pillars can help the king much in performing his duties properly. Pulinda



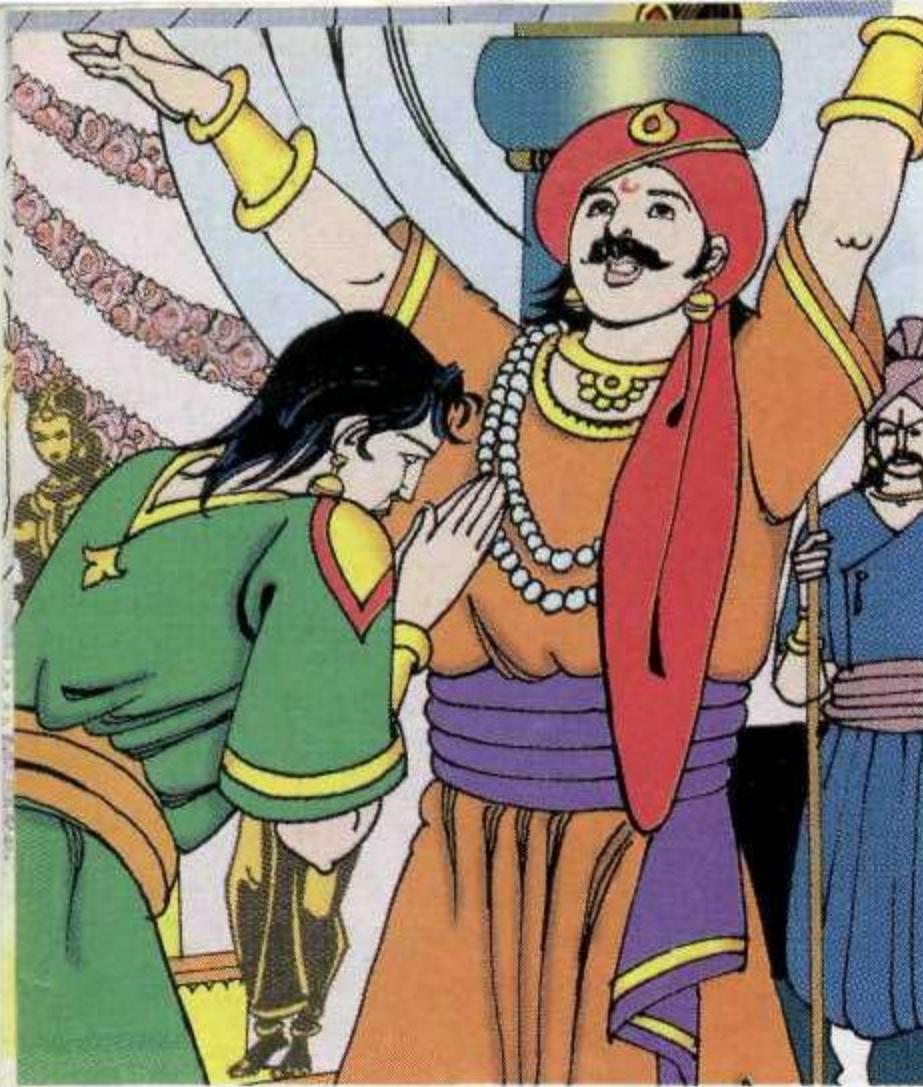
Bhattaraka made us dwell in these images so that we could imbibe the king with the required strength.

“Alas, nobody can clearly foresee the ways of destiny. The throne had just been ready when Hayagreeva died suddenly. Pulinda lost all interest in the affairs of the kingdom and decided to retire to the forest as a hermit.

“But what was to be done to the throne? It had been designed for Hayagreeva. Pulinda did not feel like giving it to Hayagreeva’s heir. After a long meditation on the issue, he decided to leave the throne for some prince to come in future who would be as great as Pouraswata.

“Applying his supernatural powers, he created the mysterious serpent who





was expected to guard the throne. The serpent would examine whoever tried to retrieve the throne. If the person passed the test, it would be clear that he had the basic qualities to possess the throne. But thereafter he must pass the tests to which we the spirits residing in these images should put him.

“Now, O Prince, you deserve congratulations for having passed the serpent’s test. Now it is our turn to tell you a story each and ask you to answer the riddles emerging from them. If you are lucky enough to pass our tests, you will earn the right to sit on the throne as a glorious monarch. Not only that, you will also receive *Chandrahasa*, a moon-shaped precious instrument.

However, should you fail in the tests, the beautiful garland around your neck will disappear and the throne, too, will go underground as it was!”

The spirit of the image fell silent. The silence in the hall was gradually broken by whispers. King Sridatta looked pensive. Anxiety marked the sweet face of Srilekha. Sivananda as well as the senior officials of the royal court looked disturbed.

But Vijayadatta stood calm and composed. He then turned to his father and Sivananda and said: “I think I should take up the challenge, if I have your permission.”

Sridatta blessed his son, saying: “May victory be yours. Let the glory of our dynasty increase through you!”

Vijayadatta looked at the image.

“O gracious spirit, I’m prepared for the test. Please go ahead!”

“Very good, O noble prince. Now, here’s a story for you,” said the spirit and she went on:

Once, many many years ago, a king named Kalaketu ruled the kingdom of Tarapur. He was incapable of thinking for himself. At the same time, he was not at all prepared to lend his ears to sage advice given by the well-wishers of the kingdom. He considered himself the wisest and the most powerful ruler in the world.

For him culture meant only cheap



and vulgar dance; music meant only titillating sons, art meant only his own portrait, provided it looked more handsome than he really was, and poetry meant the verses written in his praise.

No wonder then the atmosphere in the kingdom was totally corrupted. Those poets in his kingdom, who were gifted but had nobody to patronise them, left for the neighbouring kingdoms where they were warmly received.

This infuriated the king. He ordered that nobody should leave his kingdom. Further, he banned poetry, because some naughty people wrote verses of satire against him.

The one to suffer most was his queen Haimavati. She was a poet herself and a scholar in Sanskrit. But she had to keep her creative inspiration suppressed.

As the queen had not been able to bear a child, the king took two other wives. But none of them presented him

with an heir. As a result, they were treated very badly by the king. He looked upon them as his slaves.

There was no adequate rain in the kingdom for two consecutive years. The king had taken no steps to develop irrigation though there was ample scope for that. The crops failed. Rice was brought from the neighbouring kingdoms. Traders and officials took advantage of the situation and put up the price of rice so high that the poorer sections of the people could not afford it.

Soon there was a spate of thefts and robbery. Armed thugs terrorised the common people. Bandits became so bold that they carried on their nefarious activities even in broad daylight.

No households seemed safe. At last, one day, a part of the palace itself was ransacked under the leadership of a masked man!

**(To continue)**





## MISPLACED HEROISM

Virkumar's parents died when he was an infant. He was brought up by his grandfather, Raghav.

Raghav was a hard-working farmer. Single-handed, he could turn his piece of land into a plate of gold. It yielded him a rich crop year after year. Raghav maintained himself and his grandson reasonably well and could also save some money.

All the villagers loved Raghav. That is why they loved Virkumar also. The boy was pampered by all. That, unfortunately, did not prove good for him. As he grew up, he refused to learn or work. He whiled away all his time in the company of some other village boys.

Raghav grew old. With age, his capacity to work declined. He could not till his entire land; he could not raise healthy crops as he used to. At the same time, he was unhappy on account of

Virkumar's conduct. Several times he advised the young man to learn to work. But the fellow turned a deaf ear to his words.

One year Raghav took to bed, beset with pain in his joints. He could not go up to his fields. He also began spending whatever saving he had made. An elderly widow of the neighbouring house prepared food for them. But Raghav could not afford rich or delicious food. Virkumar felt irritated. He rarely came home. Along with two or three of his friends, who were vagabonds like himself, he began stealing. The gang often threatened the shop-keepers in the bazaar and forced them to part with a share of their earnings.

One night, while Virkumar lay on the verandah of an inn, one burglar was attracted towards his bag. The fellow would have decamped with Virkumar's

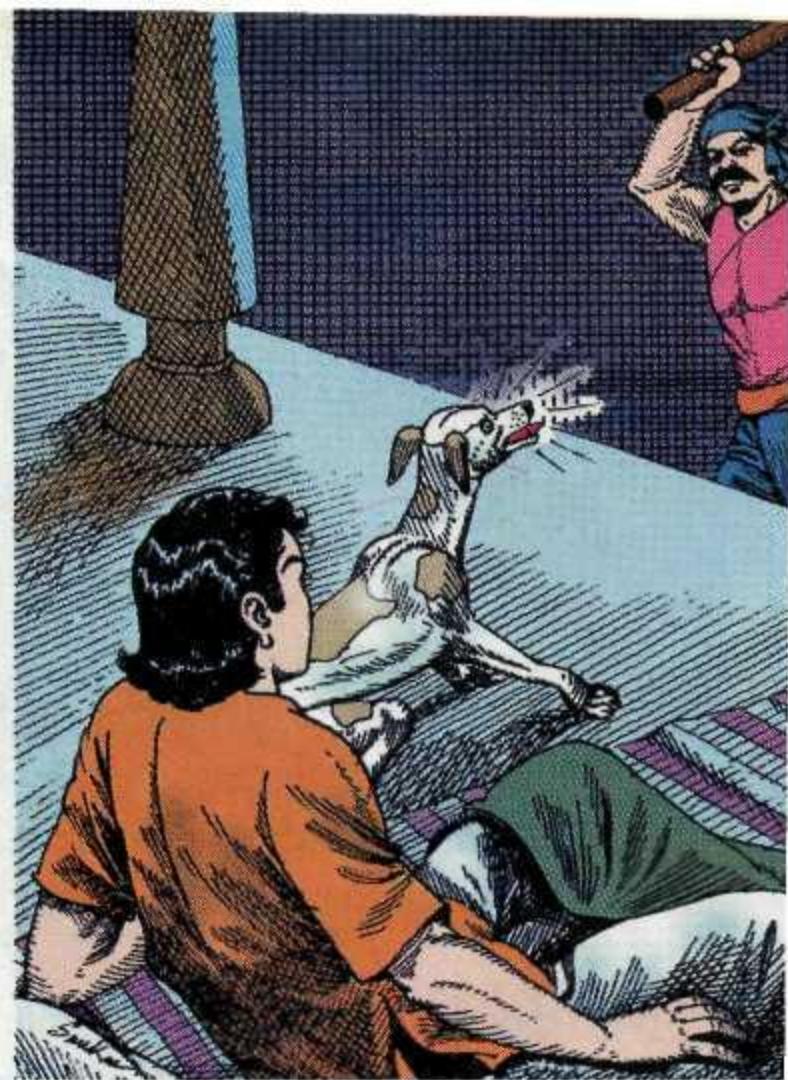


belongings if a small street dog had not violently barked at him. Virkumar woke up and, with the dog's help, not only chased the burglar away, but snatched the burglar's purse from his waist-fold.

Virkumar patted the dog and fed it. From that moment, the two became inseparable companions. By and by Virkumar's dog grew up to be the most ferocious creature in the area, just as Virkumar was the most dreaded man. With the dog by his side, Virkumar grew bolder. Small traders who came from distant places to the bazaar were his targets. In darkness, along the bushy road, he confronted them and plundered their belongings.

Virkumar was very proud that everyone feared him. Alas, pride does not last. The landlord of the region used to get information about the menace that Virkumar's dog had turned out to be. He himself was an expert hunter and he kept a ferocious giant dog. One day, he rode towards Virkumar's village while his dog ran with the horse. The moment the landlord's dog saw Virkumar's dog, it pounced on it and tore it to pieces. Virkumar's dog died with a piercing howl.

The villagers saw the incident from a safe distance. Instead of sympathising with Virkumar, they seemed to enjoy his loss. They greeted the landlord and



some of them even said: "Thank you, sir!"

Virkumar saw darkness all around him. He suddenly felt that with his dog gone, he had been reduced to a zero. Since his friendship with his dog, his other friends, all rowdies, had left him. He had nobody to console him.

That evening, after a long time, he returned home. By then Raghav was on the verge of death. Vigour came back to the old man for a moment at the sight of Virkumar.

"My child, I've heard everything. No muscle power, no dog, can ever be one's security. If you're proud of your physical strength, some day you shall be humbled by a stronger person. If you're proud of your cleverness, some



day you shall be snubbed by a cleverer man", said the dying Raghav.

"What then is your advice to me, grandfather?" asked Virkumar, sobbing.

"My child, be humble. If you've strength, use it for serving someone in need."

These were almost his last words. When he died, the villagers did everything to perform his last rites. His immediate neighbour, Sudarshan, invited Virkumar to his house and fed him.

Next day, in the evening Virkumar overheard Sudarshan's wife telling Sudarshan: "You shouldn't go to the fields today. You have fever."

"I've to go. Last night some thieves cut away the ripe crop from the fields near our field. Who knows, tonight it may not be from our field?" said Sudarshan.

From the verandah Virkumar said loudly: "Uncle, please allow me to guard the crop in your field tonight. I'm

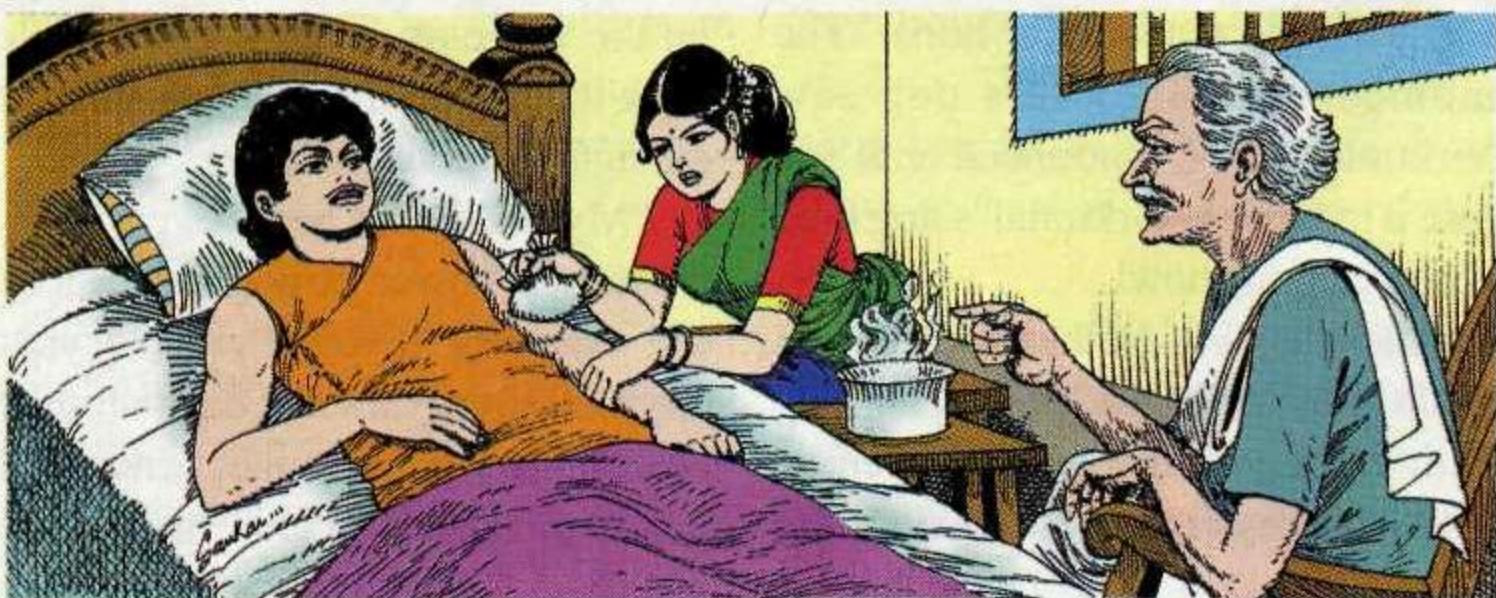
strong enough to offer resistance to any plunderer".

Sudarshan was unwilling to leave the job to Virkumar. But Virkumar insisted on taking it up. A lathi in hand, he went across to the field.

At midnight, the villagers heard some shrieks and shouts from the fields. Some of them went out to see what the matter was. On seeing them, the thieves fled. In fact, the thieves had come as a gang to plunder the lands of several villagers. Virkumar single-handedly had checked them, inflicting injuries on so many of them. In the process, he himself had been wounded.

The villagers brought him back to Sudarshan's home. He was nursed by his family and recovered soon. By now, he had become the hero of the village. In due course of time, he married Sudarshan's daughter and lived an ideal life.

"Virkumar was always a vir (hero)," the villagers said. "But his heroism was temporarily misplaced!"





## THE MYSTERIOUS MENDICANT

Once a mendicant appeared before a king and said: "Pity, I know what is to be done, but don't know how to do it."

He appeared again the next day and repeated his statement. The king asked him: "How can I help you to solve your problem?"

"If you give me the money I need now, I'll return the sum to you in due course; indeed, I'll give you a thousand times more than what you give me now," replied the mendicant.

The king at once ordered his treasurer to give the amount the mendicant needed. The king's minister did not approve of it. He whispered to the king: "How do we know that the man is not a cheat?"

The king, however, did not pay any heed to the minister's warning.

A year passed. The mendicant appeared before the king again and said, "My lord, give me some more time and more money. I'm on the way to success."

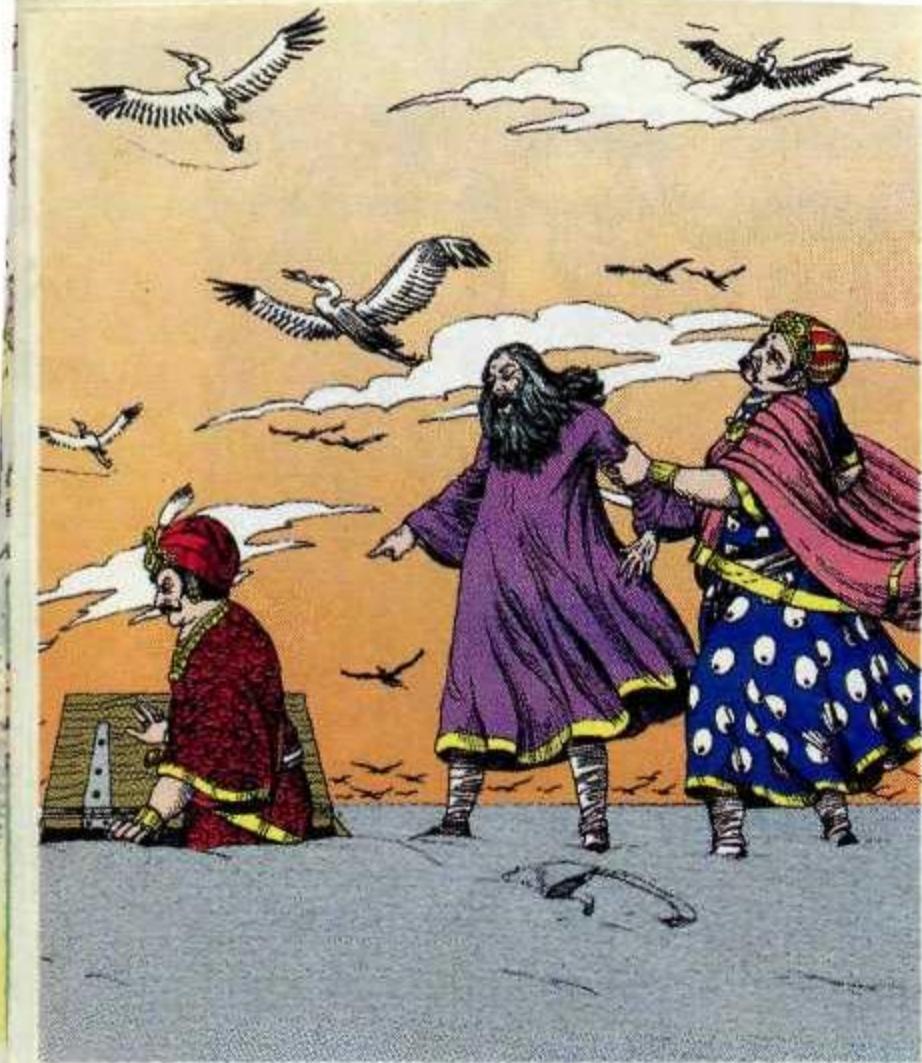
"My lord! Instead of more time and money, this fellow deserves a term inside our jail," the minister whispered to the king.

But the king instructed his treasurer to give the amount the mendicant needed and told the minister: "I feel the man is no cheat. I can afford to take a risk."

Yet another year passed and the mendicant showed up in the royal court again. "My work is about to be completed. But I need a little more money."

"How dare you take advantage of our king's generosity?" blurted out the





minister. "What have you done with all the money you have received so far?"

But the king did not lose patience. He smilingly requested the minister to calm down and give the mendicant the money he desired.

The mendicant met the king six months later.

"Do you need still more time and money?" asked the minister sarcastically.

The mendicant did not reply to the question. He looked at the king and said, "My lord! My work is over. Be pleased to give me your company. You will come back feeling rewarded."

The king made preparations to

accompany the mendicant.

"My lord! It is not wise to go out alone with a stranger. Take a few bodyguards with you," advised the minister.

"That might mar the work," cautioned the mendicant. "However, if the minister himself so desires, he may join us."

The mendicant led the king and the minister towards the seashore. A small boat awaited them there, with two boatmen ready to ply it. The mendicant asked the king and the minister to get into it and himself did the same.

The boat reached a tiny island. The mendicant got off the boat and his two passengers followed suit.

"This seems like an enchanted island. Maybe, the mendicant wishes to perform some witchcraft with our help," the minister whispered to the king.

The tiny island was covered with ashes. At its centre was an opening sealed with a wooden plank.

"My lord! Go down into the underground chamber and see what is there," the mendicant said, lifting up the plank.

The king did as advised. But the



suspicious minister unsheathed his sword and holding the mendicant by his arm, said: "This sword will pierce through you if any harm befalls the king."

The mendicant showed no sign of fear. In a few minutes the king climbed out, looking surprised and delighted. He asked the minister to go down and see for himself what was there in the chamber.

The minister, too, returned equally delighted and surprised.

"What is all this? Wherefrom came such a heap of pearls?" asked the king.

"My lord! I was a trader. Often I undertook voyages to various ports, in the course of which I came across this tiny island. I observed that cranes gathered here in large number. During the time of ebb, they collected oysters from the mud around the island. They were not ordinary oysters, but pearl-

oysters. The cranes ate their meat and left the remains on the island. The remains included pearls.

"I had planned to collect those pearls. But suddenly, in an epidemic, my wife and children died. I developed an aversion for the wordly life and became a mendicant. But the pearls of this island haunted me. I realised that unless I took some step to put them to use, I'll have no peace of mind.

"With the money I received from you I brought a boat, hired two boatmen, and brought here sackfuls of ash. I spread the ashes on the island. As soon as the cranes dropped the oysters on the ground, they were covered with ashes. The cranes, unable to find them, brought more and more of them onto the island,

The king and the minister expressed their gratitude to the mendicant who soon left for the forest.



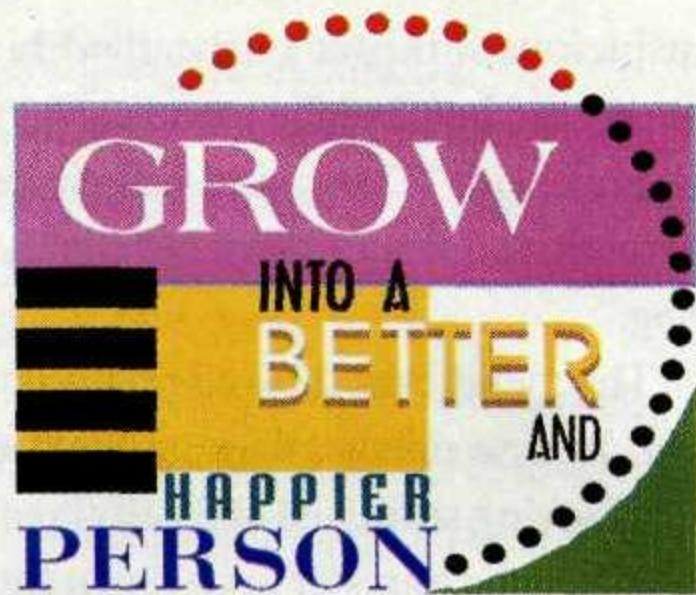
## Myslef and My World

### **PLAIN SPEAKING ABOUT THE PLANE**

A proverb popular in Thailand runs like this: "The sweetness of a sweetmeat lasts on our tongue only for a moment; but the sweetness of a sweet word lasts in our heart forever."

There are many who take pride in declaring: "I'm always blunt. I never mince words. I don't care if anybody feels hurt at my plain speaking." On the face of it, such statements sound quite ideal. But often they are only a mask for the speaker's ego. Indeed, one should speak the truth. One must not compromise with a lie. But here we are concerned with the manner of speaking and with the habit of jumping to conclusions. The other day, a gentleman said while speaking casually to three of his acquaintances: "I travelled from London to Pondicherry all the way by plane." He had hardly left the scene when one of his listeners burst into a guffaw and remarked: "The snob does not know that no plane flies to Pondicherry".

But the speaker could hear it outside the door. He came back and said: "Pardon me, gentlemen, there was a regular flight between Chennai and Pondicherry, though the service has remained suspended for long. If my flying from London to Chennai was real, a mere twenty-five minutes more of flying should not make me a snob! Anyway, thank you for letting me know what you think of me. This tells me what I should think of you."



The man who called the speaker a snob was so sure of his knowledge that he did not suspect it could be ignorance. He could very well have said: "I never knew that one could reach Pondicherry by air!" The speaker could have given him the information as a matter of fact. But, as the talks turned out to be, the speaker will never hold the unkind commentator in affection again.

But we should refrain from uttering harsh words not only because we will loose the other's affection. To speak sarcastically, to make loose comments to belittle others, are symptoms of one's inferiority complex. It damages the cordiality in the atmosphere. As a result, the rude speaker himself suffers along with the others. If he feels pleasure, it is a perverse pleasure and it shows that he is suffering from continuous envy and jealousy, which is a condition of suffering.

But it is never late for one to change one's outlook. One could decide to appreciate the positive elements in a person or a situation. That would change one's habit of criticising others.

And one will find that he had become a happier person himself.





## THE BLUE MONSTER

A thick forest on the river Ganga was the home of a large number of foxes. The forest offered a variety of fruits and smaller creatures to keep its fox-population jolly and busy. But Chandarava, a new-fangled young fox, had developed a great fancy for domestic fowls. Every now and then he sneaked into the nearby village in search of his favourite food.

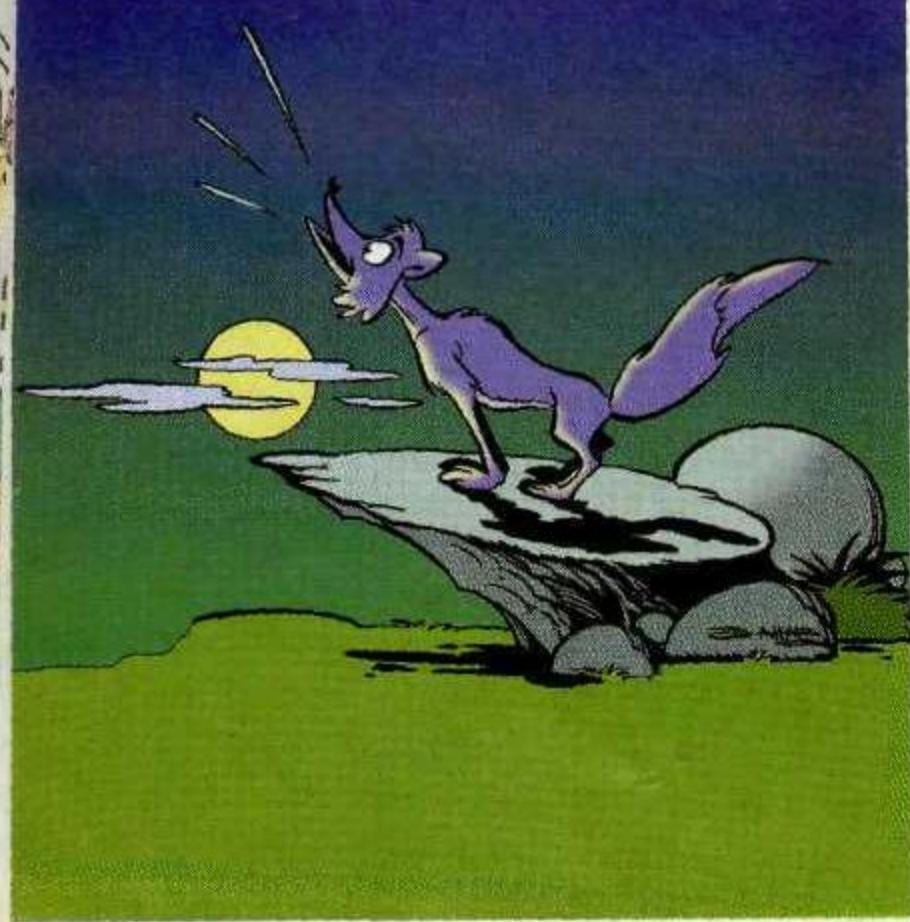
His friends warned him several times. "Don't be an adventurer. There is plenty for us in the forest. Haven't our wise forefathers said that an empty stomach is preferable to a well-fed back – well-fed with sticks?"

"My back is foxy enough to give the slip to the smartest of sticks," Chandarava bragged about himself, and he derided his well-wishers for their chicken-heartedness.

The village washerman had a brood of excellent fowls and for a long time Chandarava kept a greedy eye on them. One evening, determined to grab one of them before they were led into their roost, he watched carefully from his lookout in a bush. What he did not know was that the washerman too had kept an equally alert vigil on his brood. Chandarava was about to achieve his ambition when the washerman spied him prowling around and chased him furiously. Chandarava ran for his life and in great panic jumped into the washerman's vat which was full to the brim with indigo dye.

He managed to drag himself out after some struggle, but when his eyes fell on his own limbs, he felt that it would be better for him to die than to move about dyed in blue!





He hid in a bush for the night. When it was dawn, he climbed a rock to see if there was a ditch nearby where he could live without being seen by his fellow-creatures, till he could think of a way to a comfortable death.

Just then an elephant was passing by. He goggled in amazement at the sight of a strange creature standing on the rock, all in blue, glittering in the golden sunlight.

'Wonderful things have begun to happen,' he mumbled as he ran to inform the other patricians of the forest – the tigers and the lions – about his exciting discovery.

The elephant's flight amused the blue fox tremendously. He waited to see what would happen next.

Very soon the leading animals gathered at the foot of the rock and their leader, an aged lion, asked with profound humility, "O queer blue being, who art thou and wherefrom dost thou come? Our forefathers knew a lot. They even exchanged ideas with the elite of several far away forests. But all the knowledge they have left us tells us nothing about the existence of a creature like thou. Thou alone can enlighten us about thyself."

Chandarava immediately grasped the situation. He did not fail to see the great promise that lay hidden in the moment. He assumed an awful look and fixed his gaze on the audience below and said: "How do you expect your forefathers to have known anything about me? I do not belong to this world! Don't you see I've just descended from the blue?"

"Yes, we can see that, for none of the animals even saw you entering our forest from outside. Now, will you kindly state the purpose of your gracious visit?" asked the lion.

"To rule over you, of course!" announced Chandarava. "God in his infinite wisdom asked me to take charge of the forest, to set things right here. Henceforth it will be your sacred duty to look upon me – King Kukudrama – as your master, and to obey me."

"We will, O King Kukudrama," said the animals in a chorus as they bowed to the fox. And the fox broadcast his first order immediately: "Listen, you



lions, tigers, and elephants, I wish to see this forest as an ideal land marked for noble animals only. The inferior and undignified beasts have no place here. To begin with, I want you to drive away all the foxes from this forest. Hurry up! I want the operation to be over before sunset."

The big animals combed the whole forest and drove all the foxes to the other side of the river. Some of the young foxes and a few vixen who could not swim were drowned. Chandarava saw the entire operation from the top of a hillock. He heaved a sigh of relief now that there was no fox left on this side of the forest who could identify him.

The exiled foxes huddled together on the other side of the forest. Why should a god-sent turn hostile towards them? Who was this little blue monster? They were perplexed.

The sun went down the horizon. As was their custom, the foxes raised a

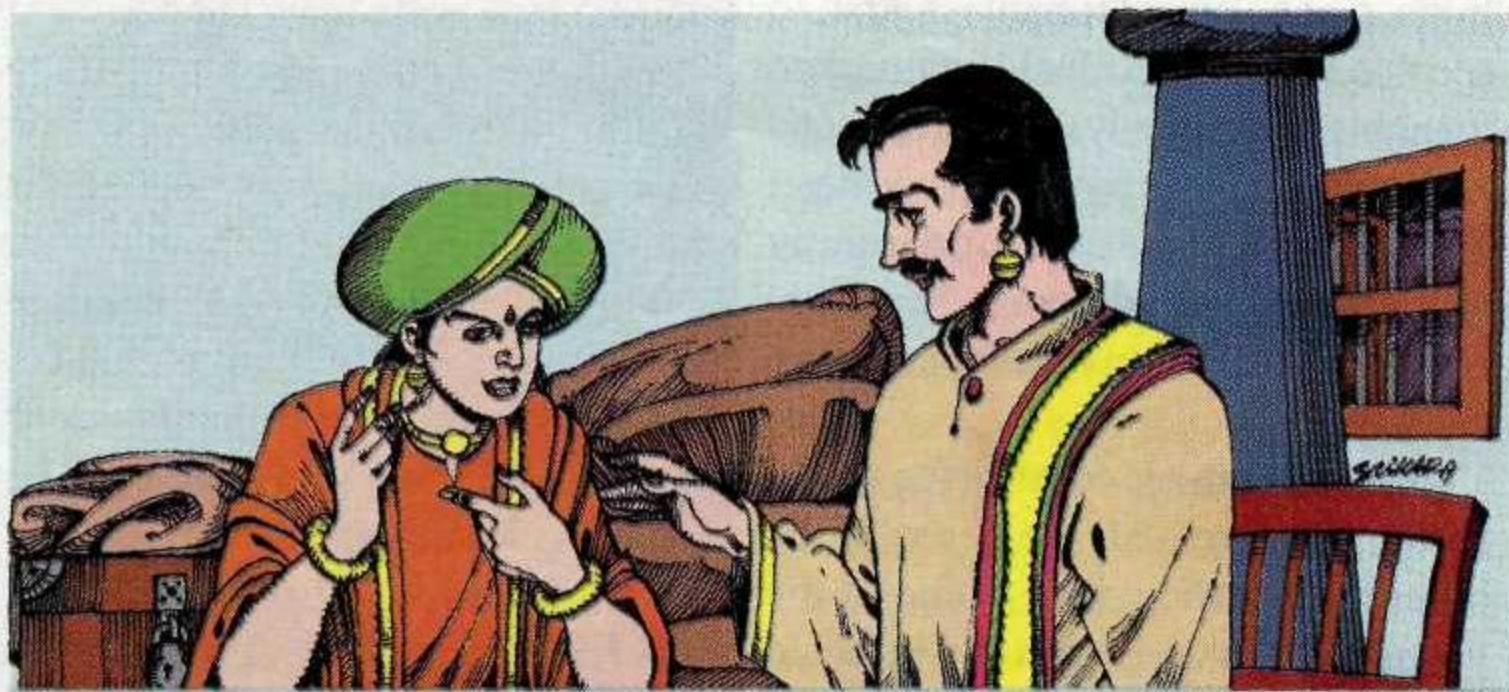
collective howl to mark the end of the day.

Just then Chandarava was enjoying an evening walk on the opposite bank, followed by a train of lions and tigers whom he had appointed as ministers and officers. But as soon as he heard the howl, he forgot all about his lofty position and, looking upward, gave out a lusty howl himself.

The lions and tigers stood stunned – but only for a moment. Next – they woke up to the great deception that had been played on them. Their blood boiling with rage, they advanced towards Chandarava. Sensing danger, Chandarava tried to run away. But it was a vain bid. He was caught and torn to pieces. His blueness was found to be not even skin-deep.

Before nightfall the harassed foxes were back in their good old forest. The big animals, out of shame, did not show their faces to the foxes for a very long time.





## THE SON AND THE SON-IN-LAW

Sitaram, the landlord of Ramnagar, was widely known for his kindness towards all. What is more, he was always ready to help those who were talented or meritorious.

Not far from Ramnagar lived a young man named Sukam. He was a poet and a singer. One day, he met Sitaram and said: "Sir, I've a great desire to proceed to the city of Lucknow. There are so many noblemen who appreciate art and poetry. But I don't know anybody in that city. Will you kindly introduce me to somebody there?"

Sitaram asked the young man to stay for the night at his house. In the evening, Sukam entertained him with a few songs composed and set to tune by himself. Sitaram was much impressed.

"Young man, I know two persons in Lucknow who would appreciate your talent. Mohan is the son-in-law

of my friend Paramanand. He is well-placed in the aristocratic society of Lucknow and is himself a poet. I know his nature well. He's always happy to promote those who possess merit.

"The second person is Vishal, my second son. He, too, is equally kind as Mohan and wields influence in society. While Mohan's love is poetry, Vishal is very much interested in music. Meet these two young men and I'm sure your desire will be fulfilled."

Sukam was happy. While taking leave of Sitaram in the morning, he said, hands folded: "As advised by you, I shall meet those two gentlemen and tell them that I carry your recommendation with me."

"Meet them by all means, but please don't mention me to them. Both of them are very sensitive. They would like to help people who deserve help, not those who carry recommendations from



influential people. I'm sure, they'll be happy to help you once they have found out your talent," said Sitaram.

"I shall do as you say, sir," said Sukam and he set out for Lucknow.

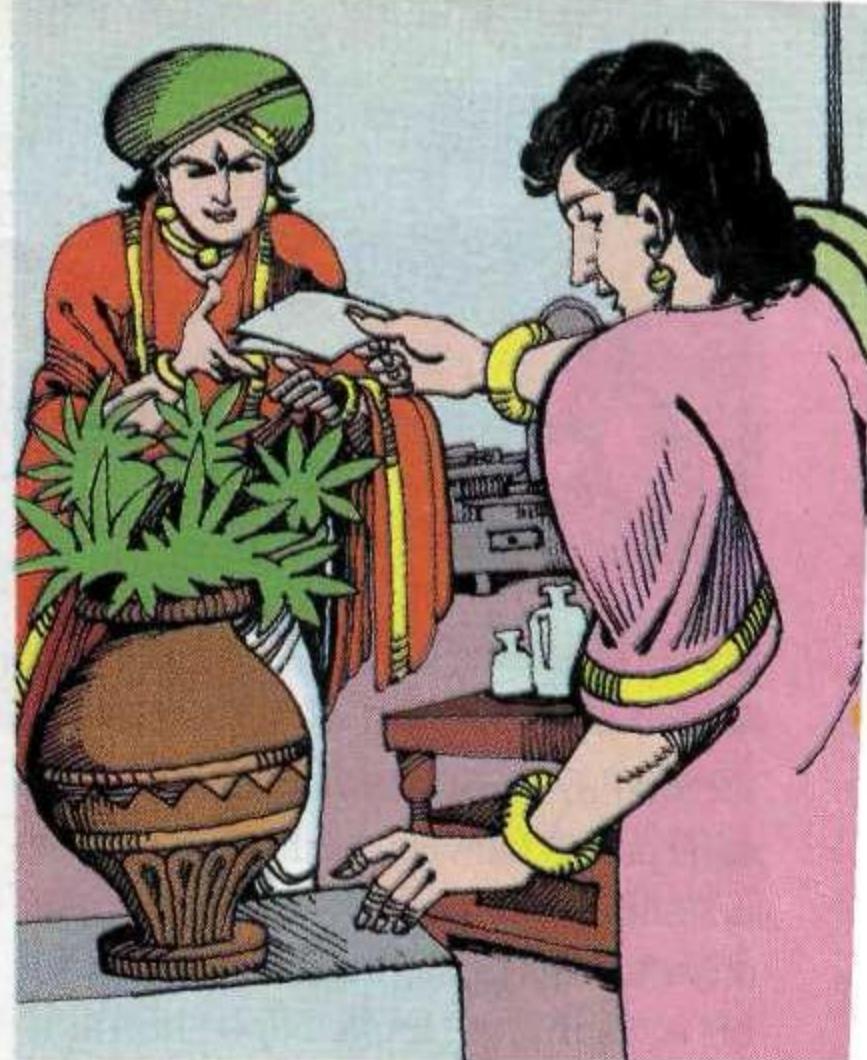
Arriving in the city, he first met Mohan. "Sir," he said, "I've heard a lot about your love for poetry and your readiness to help those who have merit but whose talents are unknown. I'm a poet from a distant village. I seek your support," he said.

Mohan received him with affection and, after a while, asked him to compose a poem on his father-in-law, Paramanand, who was a great philosopher and scholar.

Sukam wrote out a poem almost instantly and recited it. Mohan was pleased. "You're indeed a gifted poet. I've a friend named Kalasekhar. He's the wealthiest merchant in the city. He has founded an academy. He is looking for a talented poet to head the faculty of literature in the academy. A letter from me will be enough for him to appoint you at the post."

Sukam thanked Mohan and took leave of him, carrying his letter of recommendation. But instead of proceeding to meet Kalasekhar straight away, he called on Vishal.

Vishal welcomed him and said: "My elder brother had written a poem in honour of my father. I wonder if you can set it to tune and sing it for me."



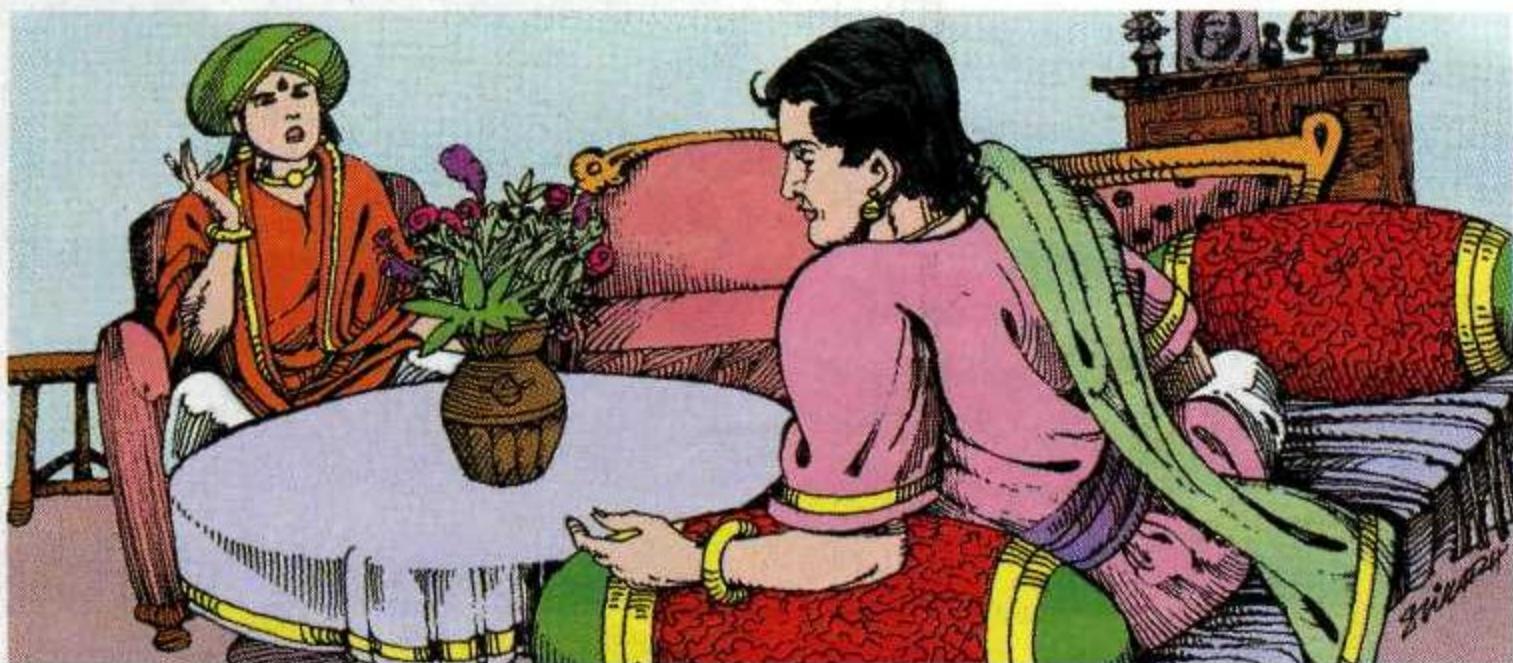
He then handed over the poem to Sukam.

Sukam set it to an appropriate tune within minutes of reading it. Vishal clapped his hands. "You're a rare talent, indeed," he said. "My friend, the merchant Kalasekhar wants someone to head the department of music in his newly founded academy. Take this letter to him and the post will be yours," he added.

Kalasekhar was pleasantly surprised that two of his friends whom he trusted most had recommended Sukam to head two different departments.

"Well, young man, I would like to have proof of your talent both in poetry and music. Can you sing to me a poem composed and tuned by yourself?" he asked.





Sukam sang one of his own poems and Kalasekhar was deeply moved. He not only appointed him the head of the departments of literature and music in his academy, but looked upon him as a friend.

Sukam was given a fine house adjacent to the academy and within a month he organised the two departments under him in a praiseworthy way. He then decided to hold a reception in honour of those who had been his benefactors.

"Look here, Sukam, it's my nature to help those who are talented. I don't expect any praise or public acknowledgment of my conduct," said Mohan.

"Sir, by attending the reception you'll only be helping me further!" said Sukam.

"How?"

"Sir, one day I may grow proud and boast that my achievements are due to my talent alone. The fact is, one cannot come to limelight, despite having talent,

unless someone had recognised his talent. Once I publicly acknowledge my indebtedness to you, I'll never dare to be boastful. You should help me to remain humble."

Mohan was so deeply touched by Sukam's attitude that he agreed to attend the reception. Sukam requested him to suggest the names of others whom he should invite.

"Here are the addresses of my father-in-law and my brother-in-law. They have heard you sing your lyrics and recite your poems. They admire you," said Mohan.

"Why not suggest a few more names?" asked Sukam.

"You can invite my father Sitaramji and my younger brother Vishal."

Sukam was taken aback. He never knew that both Mohan and Vishal were Sitaram's sons. Sitaram had introduced Vishal as his younger son, but had introduced Mohan as Paramanand's son-in-law!



Sukam met Vishal and requested him to attend his reception. He also requested him to suggest the names of those whom he should invite. Vishal first gave him the addresses of his father and his brother. When Sukam pressed him to give more names, he suggested the names of his father-in-law Paramanand and brother-in-law Ganapati.

Sukam was once again surprised. He realised that Mohan and Vishal were not only brothers; both were also sons-in-law of Paramanand.

Sukam set out for Ramnagar to invite Sitaram to his reception and to satisfy his curiosity. On meeting Sitaram, he bowed to him and said: "Sir, you're nobler and greater than what I had thought you to be. Kindly bless me with your presence at a reception I'm organising to honour my benefactors. Now, sir, if you don't mind, be pleased to clarify another doubt of mine. Both Mohan and Vishal are your sons. Why then did you identify only Vishal as your son and

Mohan as Paramanand's son-in-law?"

Sitaram smiled and said: "There are three reasons. Both my sons are equally noble and generous. But it would have sounded boastful on my part to say the same thing about my sons. You could have suspected my statement. Secondly, Paramanand is my dearest friend. I respect him very much. I'm proud of the fact that my son is his son-in-law. Thirdly, when Mohan was an infant, my wife fell ill and Paramanand and his wife nursed him as they would have nursed their own child. That's why Mohan had always been more attached to Paramanand than to me. As you know, those who adore the Buddha are called Buddhists; those who adore Vishnu are called Vaishnavas; those who adore Siva are called Saivas. Since Mohan adored his father-in-law more, I had identified him as Paramanand's son-in-law. I hope, I've explained the matter reasonably well." Sitaram laughed again.

Sukam was amused and at the same time he felt satisfied.



*Glimpses of a great civilisation –  
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages.*

## 5. A FLOW OF DIVINE TENDERNESS



“How old was I when we visited Vadodara, Mother?” Sandip asked Jayashree.

“You were only three, my son, but it is really surprising that you remember so much!” observed Jayashree.

“I don’t remember much, Mother, but the experience of a journey by boat comes back to my memory again and again. We passed a night in a building on the bank of a river and, early in the morning, Father held me in his arms and both of you had a stroll through a grove when the sun arose and its rays transformed the river into a golden glow. Both of you stood gazing at the tender sun and directed my attention to it. That serene scene must have returned to me

in my dreams a hundred times.”

Chameli and Sandip were having their breakfast along with their grandpa. Professor Devnath was intently listening to the conversation between her daughter-in-law and her son.

“But why haven’t I witnessed such a glorious sunrise again in my life?” This time Sandip pointed his question to the professor.

“Well, my child, the sunrise is always glorious. But that was probably the first ever time you consciously observed it — because your parents were in a mood to observe it and they also wanted you to observe it. There’s also another reason for that moment to remain imprinted in your memory.”



"That was at Karnali. We passed a night at an Ashram on the river Narmada. Shaded by huge old trees, it was a charming place, indeed," said Jayashree.

"Grandpa, what's that other reason you spoke of?" queried Sandip.

"O Sandip! I really didn't intent to say it, for it requires explanation and that may not be understood by a child."

"Don't tell Sandip *bhaiya*, but you may tell me. Sandip *bhaiya* is a child, but not I. You know, Father calls me *budhi* — an old lady!" cut in Chameli.

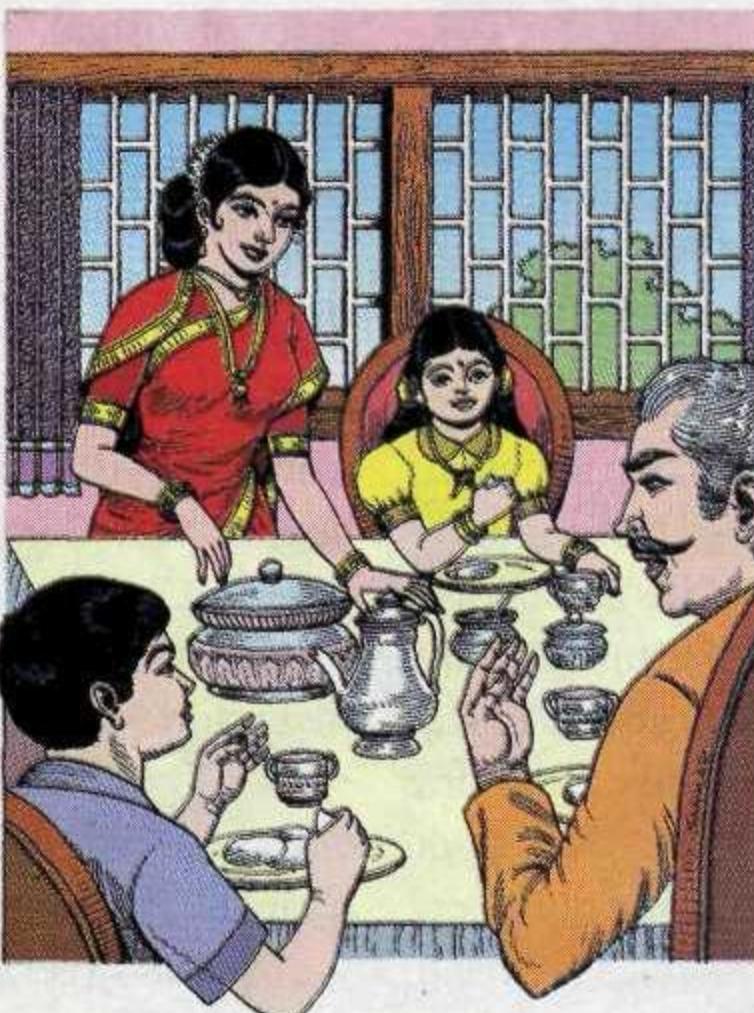
Grandpa laughed. "I've full faith in both of you. You're intelligent enough to understand what I hesitated to say, but would like to say," said Grandpa and went on: "A human being is not made of a body,

a life-force and a mind alone. He or she has something much more — a soul. In one's childhood, the soul is in the forefront of one's being. It is touched by things beautiful; it responds to love and affection better. But as one grows up, one's mind with all its calculations and one's life-energy with all its passions and desires dominates one's being. I hope you understand me."

"Grandpa! I do. I being younger than *bhaiya*, my soul is still in the forefront of my being. That's why I'm touched by the wonderful thing you said," Chameli giggled.

It seems Sandip's thoughts were far away at Karnali, swimming against the flow of time.

"Grandpa, does the river Narmada, too, have a story like



the one the Ganga has?"

"Most of the great Indian rivers have wonderful legends behind them. Narmada's is not only sweet but also highly poetic," said



the professor and he narrated the story: Once, atop the Amarkantak mountain, Lord Shiva sat absorbed in meditation for a long time. Out of his calm poise and the grace of his charming figure sprang out a beautiful girl. As she bowed to the source of her life, Lord Shiva, the compassionate God, said: "My child, you've softened my heart. Hence you're Narmada." *Narma*

means softness or tenderness.

The Lord said further: "What's the boon you would like to have from me?"

"Grant that by which I remain ever free," said the damsel.

"Let it be so," said Shiva.

Narmada roamed the forests and hills, singing and dancing and caring for none.

But soon she attracted the eyes of several gods. One of them appeared before her and tried to catch hold of her. Instantly, Narmada turned herself into water and slipped through his fingers and flowed down like a river.

"Thus flows the Narmada — the Grace of Shiva, like the Ganga, the grace of Vishnu," said the professor in conclusion.

"Wonderful, indeed!" commented Sandip. Chameli clapped her hands.

"The rivers, the mountains, and the forests of India have great stories behind them. Many such stories are symbolic. But, with the passing of aeons, their symbolism has been forgotten."

"But they're so charming even as mere stories!" observed Sandip.

"And how sweet are their names — Ganga, Narmada..." commented Chameli.

"No less sweet are the ancient names



of places in India. Do you know the old name of Patna?"

"Pataliputra," said Sandip and Chameli in chorus.

"Right. But prior to that, the city was known as Pushpapur or Kusumpur — the city of flowers. Trivandrum was Tiru-Ananta-puram. Now, of course, it has reverted to that name. It means the sacred city of the infinite Lord. Dwaraka was Dwaravati, Gulmarg was Gaurimarg, after Gauri, the divine daughter of the Himalayas. Lucknow was Lakshanavati, probably after Lakshmana of the *Ramayana*. Gauhati was Pragjyotishpur — the luminous aura of the east; Goa was Gomant, Pondicherry Vedapuri — the seat of Vedic studies, Madurai was Madhurapura — the sweet city, Ajmer was Ajay Meru, Kulu was Kulanthapitha — the sacred end of the human habitation, Kinnaur was Kinnarpuri, the

home of a kind of supernatural beings adept in arts, Paithan was Pratisthan, so on and so forth."

After a pause, Grandpa said again: "Even the names of several states were so meaningful! Karnataka was Kuntaladesa, Punjab comes from Panch-ab, the five rivers, Bihar is from Buddha Viharas, Kashmir from Kashyap Mir — the lake associated with sage Kashyap."

"And Jammu?"

"From Jamboolochan, a king of the ninth century. Yes, many of our cities bear the memory of illustrious sages or kings. Gwalior comes from the name of a sage, Gwalippa. Nagarjunakonda is after the famous Buddhist savant, Nagarjuna, Jabalpur is from sage Jabali. The list will be long."

Grandpa stood up. It was time for the children to get ready to go to their schools.

- Visvavasu

(To continue)



## WHEN THE BANDIT LAUGHED

In village Suharpur lived a dwarf named Vaman Bhatta. He was gifted with a remarkable presence of mind. He would make a witty remark on every situation, however gloomy, and arouse laughter among his listeners.

One day, he was returning from the landlord's house, along a lonely road, bordering a forest. Narrating a few humorous anecdotes to the landlord, he had obtained a pouchful of coins.

It was a hot afternoon. Vaman Bhatta sat down under a banyan tree for a little rest. Suddenly his eyes fell on a fellow who held an axe and looked like a ruffian. The fellow also looked at Vaman with curiosity.

"Look here, friend, God really knows how to strike a balance between things. If there is a harsh sun, there is also this cool shade provided by the tree!" observed Vaman.

"Next you'll say that if God has made you a dwarf, he has also given you the art of making others laugh! I know who you are. But you cannot make *me* laugh. I am a bandit and also the son of a greater bandit. My father told me that laughter was always followed by sorrow," said the bandit. He then searched Vaman's pockets and took away the pouch of coins.

"If you shout or report about this to anybody, I'll cut off your head!" threatened the bandit.

"That would not be fair, my friend," said Vaman. "People already laugh at me because I'm so short. Imagine how much more they'll laugh if you make me shorter!"

The bandit laughed. "You're a strange guy indeed! You could make even me, a bandit, laugh!" he said, and threw back the pouch at him saying: "This is your reward."



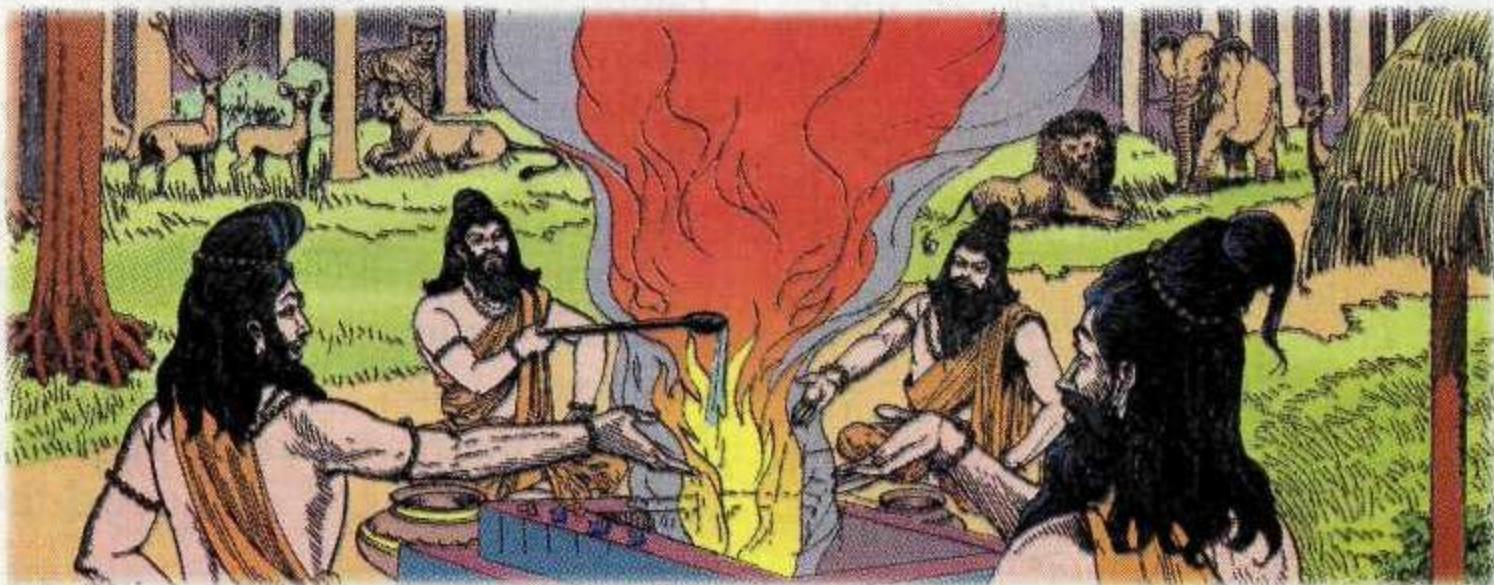
# STORY OF THE MAHABHARATA

*(The story so far: Soon after his coronation, Yudhishthira began preparations for performing the Aswamedha yagna. He released the horse after it was duly consecrated. Arjuna and a retinue of soldiers followed the horse. Those kings who allowed them free passage were invited to the yagna; those who offered resistance were defeated. On conclusion of the yagna, Dhritarashtra expressed his desire to leave for the forest and live in an ashram. On the advice of sage Vyasa, Yudhishthira agreed to his wish. The old king, Gandhari, and Kunti who wanted to go with them, were escorted to Kurukshetra where they lived in an ashram on the banks of the river Yamuna. After some days, the youngest of the Pandavas, Sahadeva, missed his mother very much. The womenfolk of Hastinapura, too, wanted to call on Gandhari and Kunti. The Pandavas, accompanied by some of the women, then started for the ashram.)*

Dhritarashtra welcomed the guests from Hastinapura and arranged for their comfortable stay in the ashram. The Pandavas spent the night with their mother. Next day they roamed the neighbouring places, along with the womenfolk and priests. At one place they saw a holy fire, with several *munis* sitting in prayer around it. The animals of the forest freely wandered there in gay abandon. The Pandavas enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere of the ashram.

Soon sage Vyasa arrived, accompanied by his disciples. He addressed Dhritarashtra: "O King, I hope you've been able to forget the sorrow of losing your sons in the war. I also hope Gandhari has no worry about you, and Kunti Devi is able to look after you both with affection and care."

One day Dhritarashtra opened out his heart to Vyasa: "Your gracious visit has been a blessing to me! I don't bother about my life after death. What worries





me is, the noble Pandavas had suffered great hardship and humiliation due to the foolhardiness of my sons. They were killed in the Kurukshetra war. I wonder what happened to the souls of those youths."

Gandhari said: "Sixteen years have passed since the death of my sons. My husband continues to feel bereaved. Draupadi is lamenting the death of her brothers and sons. Subhadra weeps for Abhimanyu. Bhurishrava's wife wails whenever she remembers her husband, sons, and father-in-law. The widows of my hundred sons are in grief. Please do something to remove the sorrow of all these people."

Vyasa turned to Kunti Devi. "You, too, seem to harbour some sorrow in your heart." She confessed that she

was sorry for Karna.

Vyasa said: "You'll all see your dear ones. ... you should not feel sorry at all. All those who died in the war were either gods or demons. Now, you should all gather on the banks of river Bhagirathi."

All of them went towards the river. They entered the river and worshipped the departing sun. After that, they gathered near Vyasa. He entered the river and loudly called out the names of the heroes who had died in the war.

Soon a strange scene was witnessed. Bhishma and Drona were seen emerging from the river. Virata, Drupada, Upapandava, Abhimanyu, Ghatotkacha, Karna, Duryodhana, and all others came out one after another. They were seen in the very dress which they had on at the time of their death. Vyasa bestowed on Dhritarashtra the power to see. The old king and Gandhari beheld to their hearts' content their sons and grandsons. After sometime, all of them disappeared in the river just as they had appeared.

Vyasa then told the wives of the Kauravas: "Those of you who wish to join your husbands may enter the river." All the women, with the permission of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, did as they had been told.

Dhritarashtra did not have any more agony. He returned to the ashram with a peaceful mind. He reminded the Pandavas that it was time they returned to Hastinapura and conducted the affairs of the kingdom.



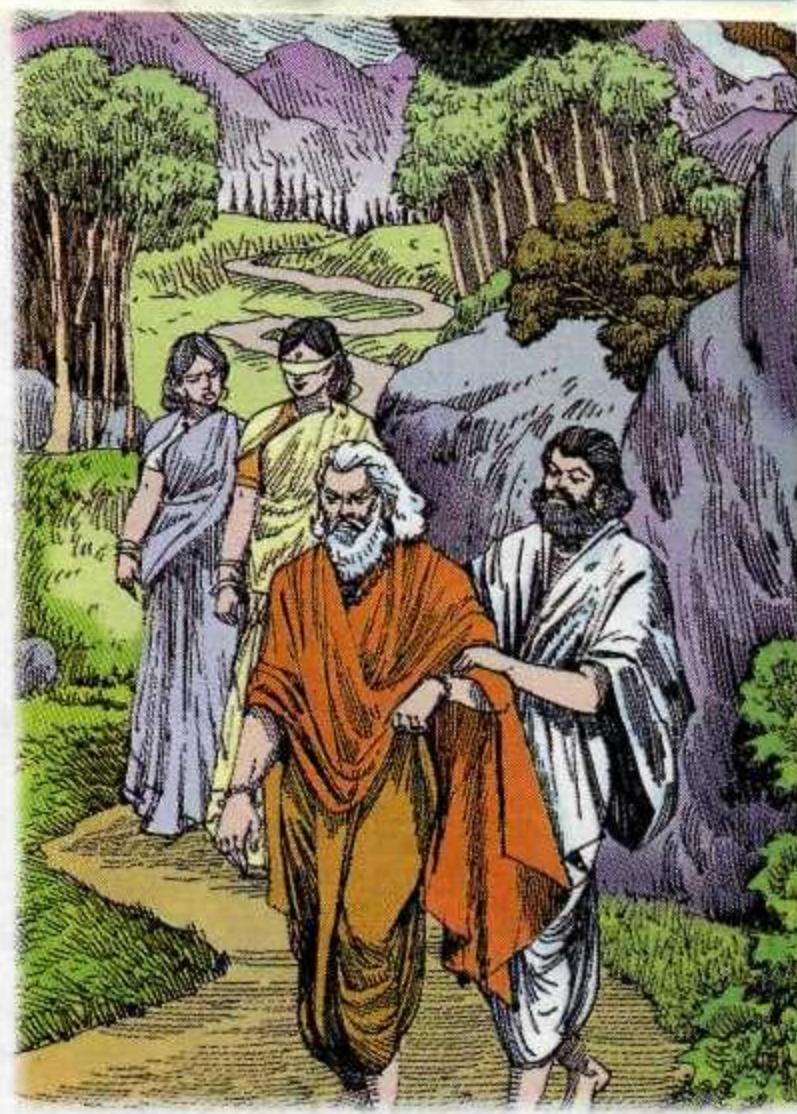
A few days later Narada came to see Yudhishtira. The sage told him he was coming from the sacred forest on the Ganga. "Did you meet our uncle? Is he well? And how are aunt Gandhari, mother Kunti, and Sanjaya?" asked Yudhishtira anxiously.

"After you left, them," Narada said, "Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti went away to Gangadwara, leaving Kurukshetra. Sanjaya and a Brahmin priest accompanied them. At Gangadwara, your uncle gave up food and lived on air alone for six months. Gandhari was taking nothing but water. Kunti, too, fasted. Sanjaya ate only a blade of grass every day. The priest performed the sacred rites every day. After some time, Dhritarashtra wandered in the forests, Gandhari and Kunti following him. Kunti took great care of Gandhari. One day, while Dhritarashtra was coming from the river after a bath, a fierce wind blew and soon the forest caught fire.

"When the fire began to spread, Dhritarashtra told Sanjaya: 'You should go away to a safer area. I've decided to end my life in this fire and pass on to heaven. Nothing can change my decision. You must obey this last command from me.'

"Sanjaya pleaded with him: 'O King, how can I see you die in the fire? It is rapidly spreading around you. Please come out of it.'

"Sanjaya! Don't you know that a yogi should be ever ready to die either by wind or water or fire? Now, you



must leave me forthwith!" ordered Dhritarashtra.

"Sanjaya walked with deep love around Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti and requested them to sit in a trance. Their bodies were soon consumed by the flames. Sanjaya later met me and narrated everything to me before departing for the Himalayas," concluded Narada.

The sad news of the demise of Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti was received by the Pandavas and the people of Hastinapura with profound sorrow. Narada revealed to Yudhishtira that the fire that burnt the forest had emanated from Dhritarashtra himself.

Yudhishtira went up to river Ganga and performed the necessary rites for



the departed souls.

It was now eighteen years after the war had ended. Yudhishtira's reign continued for another eighteen years. Towards the end of this period, he heard the shocking news that all the Yadavas, except Krishna and Balarama, had died fighting against each other.

Krishna told his charioteer Daruka to go to Hastinapura and inform the Pandavas about the destruction of the Yadavas.

While Krishna was talking to Babhru, he fell to an arrow from a hunter. Krishna proceeded to Dwaraka where he left the womenfolk in his father Vasudev's care.

When Krishna went back to Balarama, he found him in a trance. As he watched him, a white snake came out of his mouth and entered the sea. Varuna and the snake-gods were there to receive it.

Krishna wandered for a while and then lay down under a tree. A hunter mistook his feet for the ears of a deer and shot him with a fatal arrow. Krishna now left his body. A luminous spirit

spread all over the earth and the sky and rose to heaven.

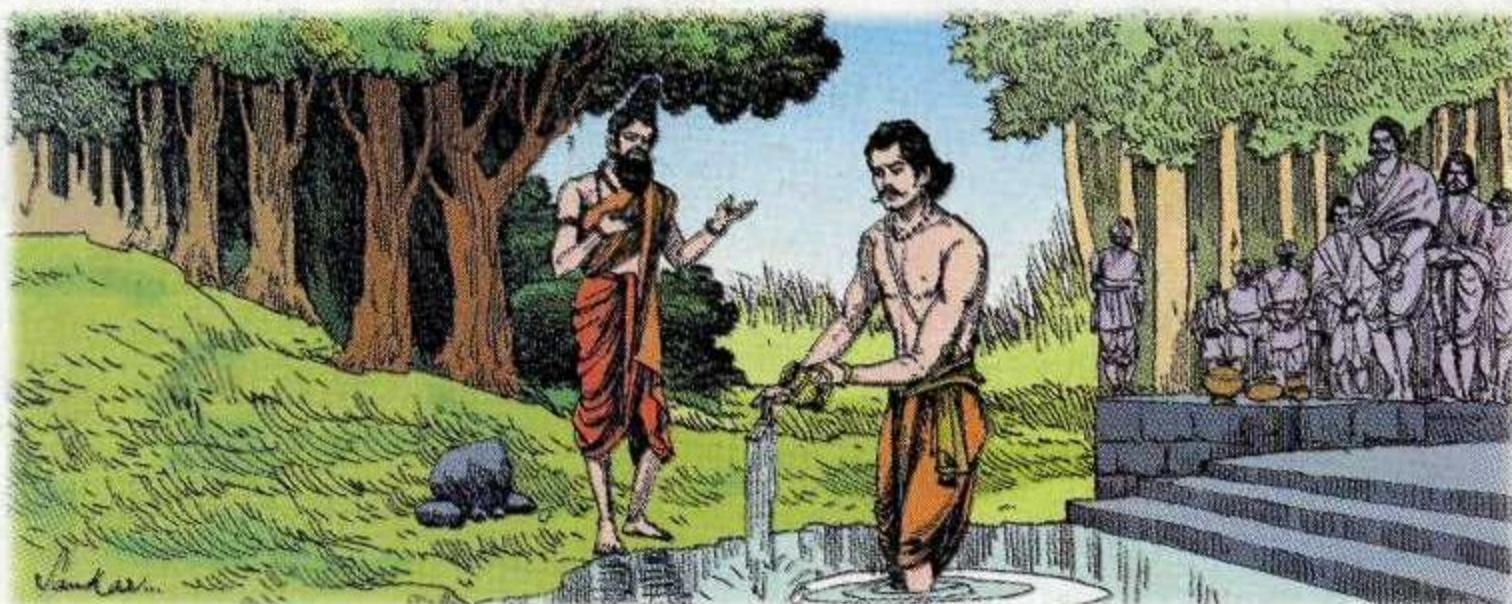
When Daruka conveyed the sad news of the demise of Krishna, the Pandavas were dumbfounded to hear of the tragedy. Arjuna hurried with Daruka to Dwaraka and met the hapless women. They wept bitterly when they saw Arjuna. He offered his condolences to Satyabhama and Rukmini and went to meet Vasudev.

Vasudev embraced Arjuna. "My son, who was the mighty destroyer of demons, is no more. Krishna had advised me to be guided by you."

Arjuna met the council of ministers. He said: "Dwaraka will very soon go under the sea. I want all of you to leave this place for Indraprastha. There Vajra would be crowned the king."

The next day Vasudev sat in a trance and soon left his body. His wives, Devaki, Rohini, Vadra and Madira, too, left their bodies along with him.

Arjuna visited the place where the Yadavas had fought and died. He performed their funeral rites. On the seventh day, he set out from Dwaraka



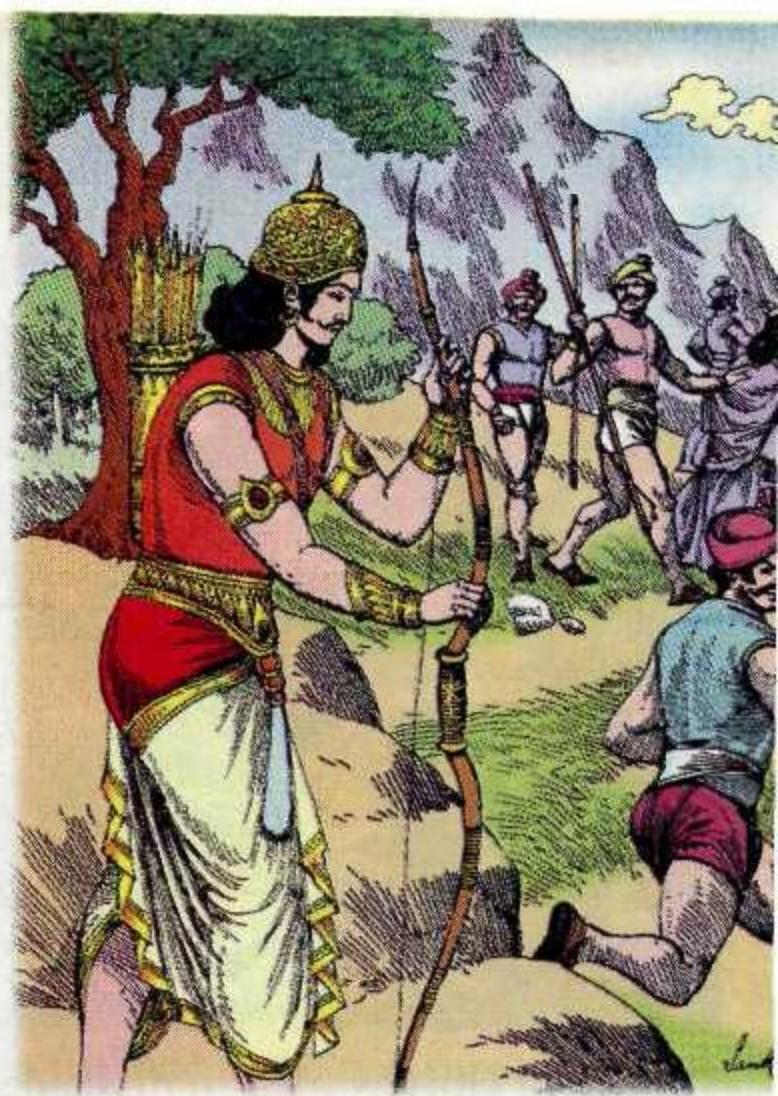
with the Yadava women. As they left the city, walking or riding on chariots, elephants and horses, the sea advanced behind them and Dwaraka was soon submerged.

After halting at several places, Arjuna reached Panchanada, where some robbers surrounded the women. Arjuna threatened them with dire consequences, but they did not pay any heed. He decided to annihilate them with his great bow the Gandiva. But lo and behold! He could not hold it firm in his hand. He could not even remember the *mantra* for using the weapon. He was thus unable to prevent the robbers from driving away with most of the women and their wealth. Arjuna managed to reach Kurukshetra along with the women who had been left behind by the robbers.

Arjuna later visited the ashram of Vyasa. The great sage with great anxiety asked him: "O Arjuna, why do you look so pale and pensive?"

"O great sage, indescribable is my sorrow," said Arjuna. "Krishna and Balarama are no more. I do not wish to live in a world in the absence of Krishna. Besides, something strange has happened: all my strength has vanished. The Yadava women whom I wanted to protect were forcibly taken away by robbers before my very eyes. I'm without peace and I'm afraid I'm going mad. What should I do?"

"Have peace, O Arjuna!" said Vyasa pacifying him. "Krishna could have changed the course of events, but he



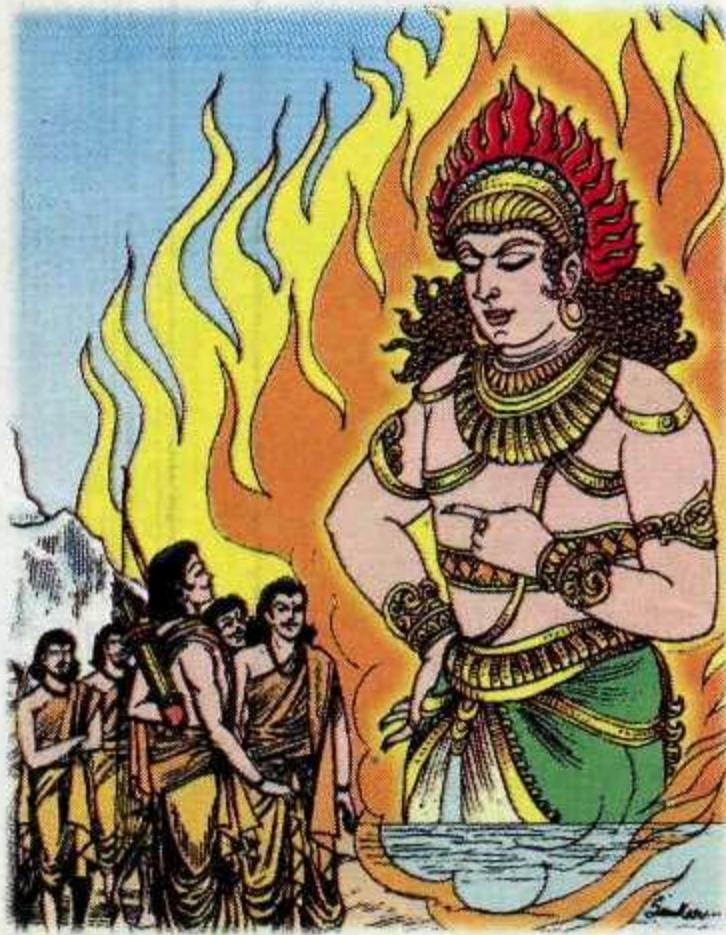
didn't like to interfere. The work of the Krishna *avatar* has come to an end, and he has returned to his own place."

Arjuna returned to Hastinapura and reported everything to Yudhishtira. He decided that he should undertake a great journey through the unknown—in quest of the ultimate destination of life. His wish was echoed by his brothers. Yudhishtira entrusted the responsibility of the kingdom to Yuyutsa and chose Parikshit as his heir. Thus, Parikshit was to rule Hastinapura while Vajra was to rule Indraprastha.

The Pandava brothers and Draupadi shed their royal clothes and ornaments and put on dresses made out of bark.

Thousands of people gathered to catch a glimpse of the heroes when the time for their departure came.





Several citizens tried to dissuade them from proceeding to their unknown destination, but in vain. When they crossed the city limits, a dog was seen following them.

The Pandavas crossed many a river and passed through many a land. Arjuna was still carrying his famous bow, the Gandiva. When they reached the seashore, Agnideva, the god for Fire, suddenly appeared before them like a luminous mountain and said: "Listen, O Pandavas, Arjuna has no need of the Gandiva any longer. He should now surrender it to Varuna from whom it had come."

The Pandavas walked southward along the sea coast before turning to the north. They saw Dwaraka submerged in the sea. Soon they were approaching the Meru mountains.

While they were walking, Draupadi

fell down dead. Bhima informed Yudhishtira about it. But Yudhishtira did not look back. A little later, Sahadeva too fell down. Then came the turn of Nakula and Arjuna. Bhima duly informed Yudhishtira about their fate. But Yudhishtira did not look back. He remained calm even when Bhima, too, fell down. Yudhishtira continued to walk, followed by the dog.

Soon Lord Indra, in his chariot, appeared before him and welcomed him into it. But Yudhishtira said: "All my brothers as well as Draupadi, who are dead, must ascend to heaven with me. I cannot go there without them."

"Their spirits have already passed on to the sphere where they ought to have gone. You alone can go to heaven without having to leave your body. Please come with me," said Indra.

"This dog has followed me faithfully through all the travails on the way. He, too, must be allowed to ascend to heaven. I cannot go there without him," insisted Yudhishtira.

"You are to be received into heaven because of your virtues. How can a dog enter heaven?" pleaded Indra.

But Yudhishtira remained adamant. While their dialogue continued, the dog suddenly assumed the form of Yama, the god of Death and Dharma. "I had once tested you, disguised as a *yaksha*, while you lived in exile in the forest. I have now tested you again. It is hard to find an equal for you even in heaven. You certainly deserve to go there along with your body," said Yama.



A number of gods came forward to welcome Yudhishthira to heaven. They all began their journey in their respective chariots. "Many great souls have entered heaven, but none has done so while in his body," observed sage Narada.

"But I can't dwell here without my brothers. I'd rather go where my brothers and Draupadi have gone," Yudhishthira was adamant.

A great surprise awaited Yudhishthira. He saw Duryodhana in heaven in all splendour amidst the gods. He wondered how someone with a long record of misdeeds could occupy a place in heaven. He murmured: "I've the least desire to live in a sphere where Duryodhana could find a place!"

If Duryodhana, with all his sinful actions, could dwell in heaven, what about my brothers?" Yudhishthira

queried.

The gods told him: "If you want to see them, you've to descend to their region. Follow this guide if you so desire!"

Yudhishthira followed the guide and soon came to a passage, which was dark and full of worms and flies nauseating things like rotten flesh or skeletons lay scattered everywhere. Disgusted, Yudhishthira asked: "How long must we keep walking?"

"If you're tired, O King, let's go back. This is a long, long way, with even more ghastly sights yet to be seen!" said the guide.

Yudhishthira felt disappointed. As he was brooding over his course of action, he heard people moaning: "O King! Please stay here for a while. Your mere presence gives us peace."

"Who are you," asked Yudhishthira



in surprise.

“I’m Karna!” “I’m Bhima!” “I’m Arjuna!” “I’m Nakula!” “I’m Sahadeva!” “I’m Draupadi!” said a host of voices.

Yudhishtira felt deeply distressed. He told his guide: “You may now return to heaven. Tell the gods that I prefer to be here, since my presence gives my brothers a little relief.”

The guide departed and on reaching heaven, reported everything to Indra.

Soon Indra and other gods appeared before Yudhishtira. As they arrived, the awful darkness disappeared. The place was full of heavenly fragrance carried by a sweet breeze. The moaning of invisible spirits were heard no more.

“Yudhishtira! Now be pleased to return with us. The phase of gloom through which you were required to pass is now over. Your brothers as well as Draupadi have all gone to heaven by now. The law is like this: Everybody has to suffer the consequences of his in, however

little, as everybody will be rewarded for his virtue. If the reward for the virtue is enjoyed first, the consequence for the sin will come later. Those who have very little sin are made to suffer the hell first. Look, yonder flows the Ganga of the heaven. Once you take a dip in it, your earthly consciousness will entirely vanish.”

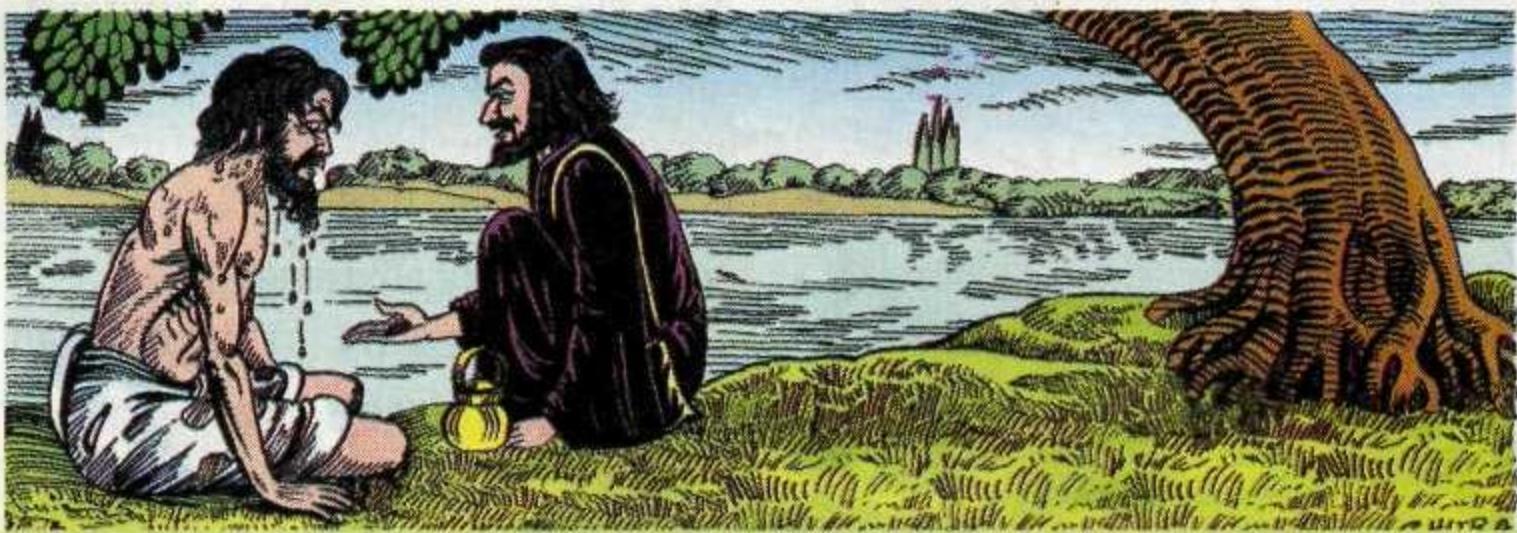
Yudhishtira entered the Ganga of the heaven and gave up his body in the water. He went over to his brothers. He saw Krishna who was still in the form which he had taken on earth. Arjuna was with him and they received Yudhishtira with joy.

Karna, too, could be seen. He looked as luminous as the sun. Bhima was with the Marutas. Nakula and Sahadeva, too, could be seen.

Thereafter Indra showed him Draupadi, her sons, Dhritarashtra, Abhimanyu, Pandu, Kunti, Madri, Bhishma, Drona and other heroes, and told him all about their destiny.

**(Concluded)**





## THE STRANGE WILL

This happened some three centuries ago. A young man jumped into a lake and was about to drown when a holy man, who was passing by, dragged him ashore.

"What were you doing?" asked the holy man.

"I was going to end my life, because I'm an unlucky person. I had had no success in anything in my life," said the young man, whose name was Shivasaran.

"Young man, killing oneself is as bad as killing someone else. You're young and you still have a long way to go. Here's a talisman for you. Tie it around your arm and you'll have better luck in whatever you do," said the holy man, encouragingly.

Indeed, things took a turn for the better from that very day. Be it for Shivasaran's faith in the power the talisman contained or be it for his own

merit, he began as a small trader and, in five years, grew to be the richest merchant in town.

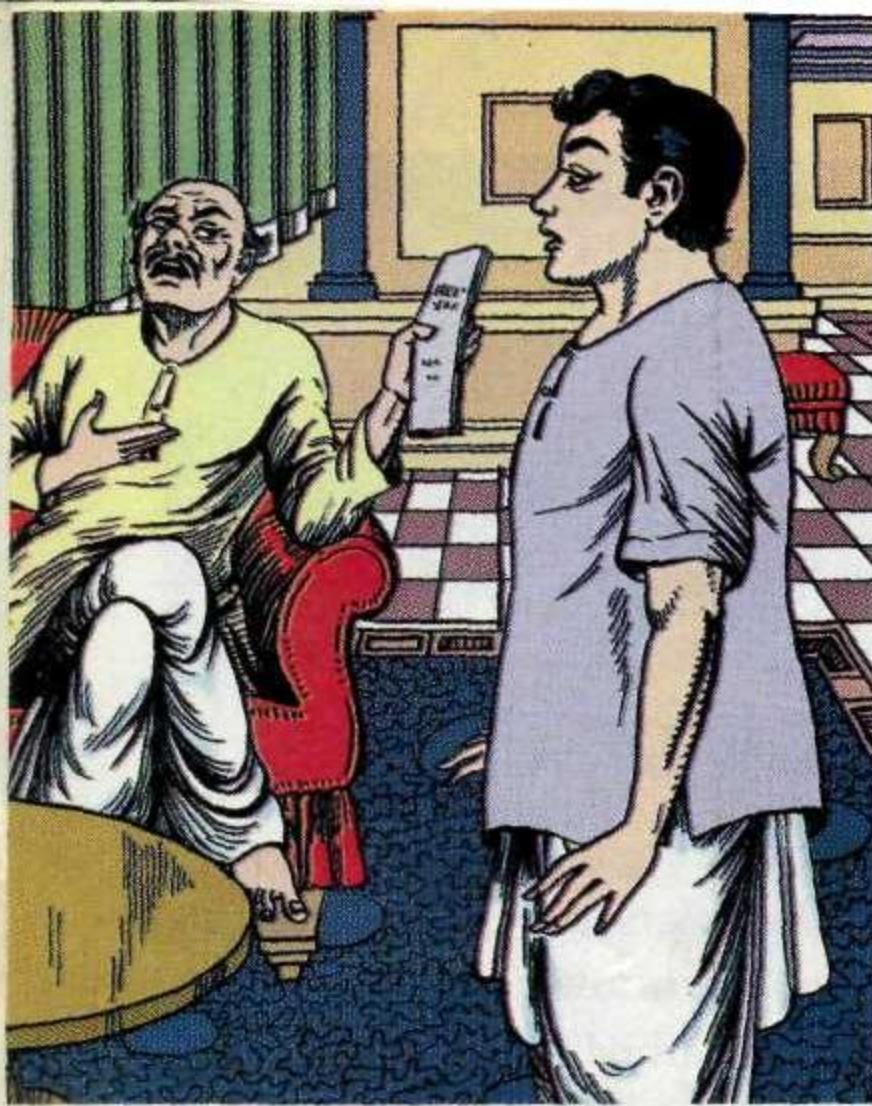
He married and built a fine house for his family. He had a faithful manager to look after his business.

He had only one child — Durgaprasad. When Durgaprasad was very young, Shivasaran's wife died. Before long Shivasaran himself fell ill and it was found that his disease was of a fatal nature.

When Shivasaran knew that he would not live long, he called his manager and said: "Young man, I trust you. That's why I'm leaving a will in which I've given you a great deal of power."

He then called some of the prominent people of the village and in their presence, he read out the will. It said his entire property would be in the charge of the manager. He must





look after Durgaprasad properly and educate him. When the boy would be sixteen, he would be given whatever the manager liked. The rest could be kept by the manager for himself.

The villagers found the will to be unusually favourable to the manager. But they did not say anything. Shivasaran asked them to be kind towards his son and see to it that the boy did not miss anything. "If there's any dispute, please go to the Zamindar Subahu Rao, who's my friend. I hope, he would be there till my son comes of age," he said.

Shivasaran died in the next few

days. The manager, true to his word, took great care of his son. He appointed the best tutors for him. Durgaprasad had no reason to complain about anything.

Years rolled by. Durgaprasad completed sixteen years of age. On the advice of his well-wishers in the village, he asked the manager to transfer the property to him.

The manager brought out Shivasaran's talisman and said: "This is the magical object which made your father wealthy. I give this to you. The rest of the property I shall keep for myself."

Durgaprasad was dumb-founded. But the manager dangled the will in front of him and said: "Your father clearly says that I will give you whatever I like. The rest I can keep for myself. Your father was no fool. Nor am I a fool. I'm acting according to his will!"

Durgaprasad felt that he alone was the fool! However, he went back to his well-wishers and reported the conversation to them.

"We had suspected that the fellow will grow greedy of the property and do this mischief. All these years he looked after you and your property so that everybody took him as an





*One's learning is one's friend when one is abroad, one's mother is one's friend at home, the medicine is one's friend when one is ill and dharma (One's spiritual development) is the friend at the time of death.*

— Kautilya

honest man. However, as desired by your father, now that there is a dispute, let us go to the Zamindar," the village elders said.

They went to the Zamindar and narrated the case. The Zamindar asked the manager to read out the will two or three times. The manager did so loudly.

"The will is clear and perfect," said the Zamindar.

"Yes, sir, it is so," agreed the manager, happily.

"You propose to give the talisman to Durgaprasad and would like to keep the property to yourself. Right?" asked the Zamindar.

"Yes, sir!"

"So you like the property. Right?"

"Yes, sir."

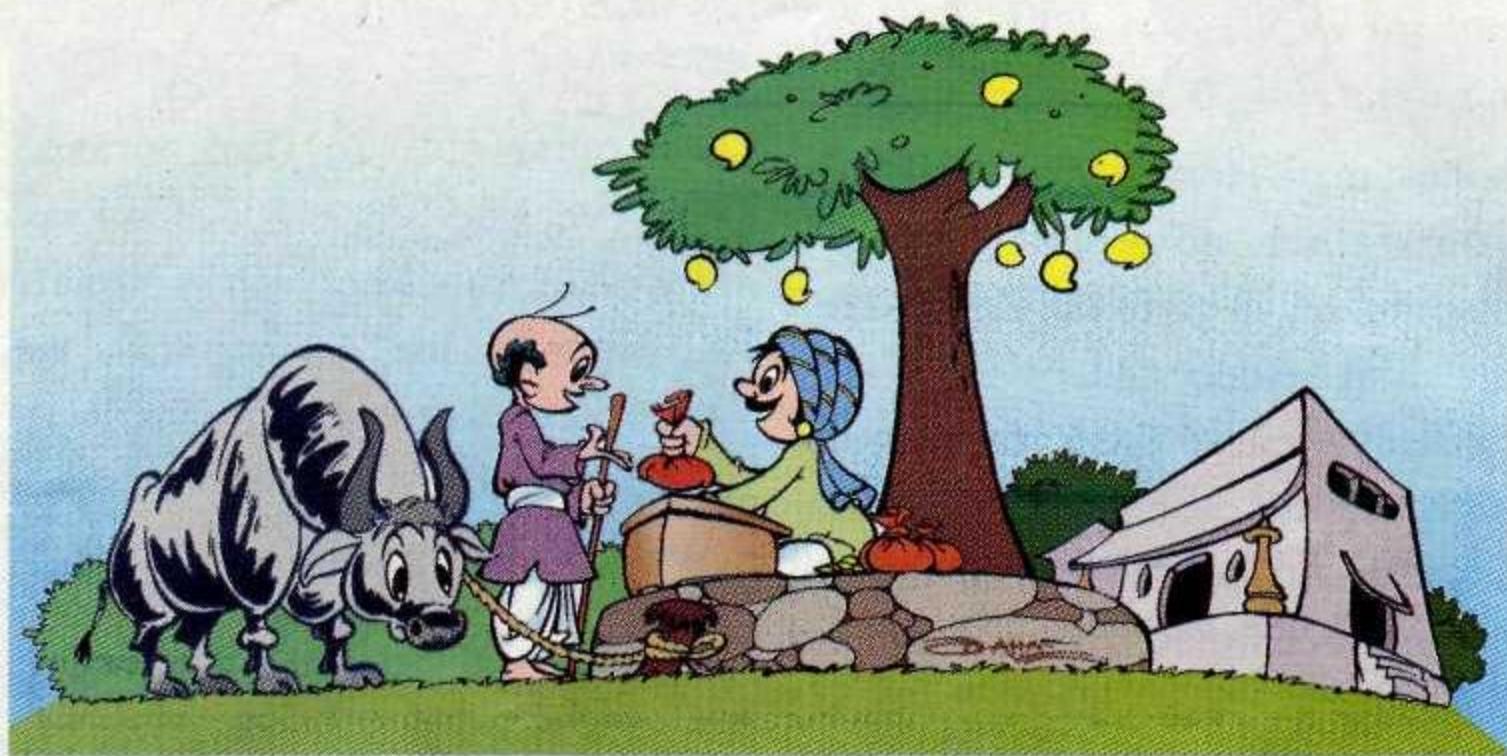
"You fool! The will clearly says

you must give to Durgaprasad whatever you like. It does not say that you can keep for yourself whatever you like. Since you like the property, you must give it to Durgaprasad. My friend Shivosaran was wise. Had he not made this kind of will, you might have fooled the boy and exploited his property. You looked after the boy and the property well because you knew that the boy will never suspect you of your motive and the property will ultimately be yours! But what does your common sense say? Will a father, while having an heir, leave everything to his manager?" said the Zamindar sternly.

He provided Durgaprasad a better manager and ordered the old manager to pay a heavy fine for being unfair to the boy.



# A PROJECT OF PROLONGED THOUGHT!



Chikarao the moneylender had nothing much to do except sit on the circular brick platform his late father had built around the mango tree in the foreyard of his house. People met him there, borrowing or paying back with interest whatever they had borrowed. Sitting there he enjoyed the breeze, kept an eye on the mango tree which abounded in fruit in the summer, and looked at the road beyond his gate. Once a while his eyes fell on a borrower who would have failed to pay back on time and he took the man to task for the default.

But he had also other satisfaction. For instance, there, very close to him, stood a bullock tied to a small pole. It had been with him for more than three months. Its owner had pawned it to him.

Chikarao appreciated the bullock very much. It was handsome.

Particularly its horns had grown harmoniously and their tips bent towards each other very gracefully. From the very first day Chikarao thought that the horns had space enough between them to accommodate his own head. In fact, the smug feeling which he thought he would have when his head would roundly fit in between the horns was very tempting.

Practically every day he reflected on the proposition. Should he sit on the bullock's back and bracket his head with those comely horns? It might be more convenient to do so standing in front of the bullock.

There was no more time to lose, for the bullock's owner had sent word that he was coming to pay his dues and get his animal released that very evening.

It would be unwise on his part to lose the bullock before making his highly



original fancy satisfied!

Chikarao cautiously mounted the bullock and pushed his head into its horns.

The otherwise docile bullock gave a start. It had obviously never had anything nearer to that experience. Panic writ large on its face, it leaped, uprooted the tiny pole to which it had been tied, and then ran. It smashed Chikarao's bamboo gate and was on the road in no time.

Chikarao meanwhile tried his best to disentangle his head from the horns, but in vain. His legs astride on the bullock, and his head locked, he presented a bizarre spectacle to the people on the village road most of whom failed to make out anything of it.

Some village youths, however, took courage and surrounded the bullock and stopped it and helped Chikarao to come

out of his predicament.

The dazed money-lender was carried home. He had received several bruises on his head and ears and a lot of bumps to tire all his limbs.

"Why did you do that?" the village elders asked him when he had sufficiently recovered from his trauma.

"Well... the space between the horns was so inviting and I was sure my head would be the best thing to be there!"

"You should have thought twice before doing such a thing!" commented an elderly man.

"You are speaking of thinking twice; aren't you? I thought a hundred times - once every day since the bullock was left in my custody! I thought for more than three months!" Chikarao replied with some anguish.





## LET US KNOW

\* *How is that the seashore is full of sand? Where does this sand come from?*

-Srinarayana Reddy, Rajahmundry

When the waves from the seas and oceans hit rocks continuously for years, they break into small particles or grains. The waves carry these grains to the shores, and this results in sandy beaches. Ocean currents are also responsible for shifting sand from place to place; thus new beaches are formed.

\* *Most plants growing on the earth are green in colour; but mushrooms are invariably white or light pink or blue, and not green at all. Why?*

- Shanta Biswal, NainiTal

The mushroom is a kind of plant called fungus. They lack the green colouring matter in other plants which is known by the technical term 'chlorophyll', which is necessary for plants to make their own food. Fungi are not capable of making their food. Mushrooms, therefore, absorb their food from dead wood or from soil.

\* *Which is the rarest of all animals?*

- Suroopa Mukherjea, Malda

The tenrec is probably the world's rarest animal. Not long ago, one of the species was found in Madagascar.

\* *What is the difference between an octopus and a squid?*

-Sankaranarayanan, Guruvayur

The octopus has eight 'arms', and the squid has ten.

\* *Which is the smallest country in the world?*

-Sumangala, Chickmagalur

The Vatican City, which is a part of the Italian capital of Rome, is generally considered as a separate nation, where the Pope has his see. It has a population of just about 1,000.





The Brihadeesvara temple

architecture. The pyramidal central tower or *vimana* rises 64 m high in

For 400 years, between the 9th and the 13th centuries, the Kaveri delta was under Chola rule. It experienced a golden age of economic prosperity. The Cholas, who ruled mainly from Thanjavur, patronised art, architecture, music and dance.

Rajaraja I (985-1014 AD), one of the greatest Chola monarchs, built the Brihadeesvara or 'Big Temple', which took six years to complete. People in 370 settlements in the Chola empire contributed to its upkeep. The practice of inscribing the names of donors in stone on the base of the *vimana* or temple tower, was begun by Rajaraja. Nearly fifty such inscriptions record the gifts of images, jewellery, gold and land revenue. Rajaraja and his sister Kundavai were the largest donors.

The temple is an outstanding example of Chola

## ON THE BANKS OF THE KAVERI - IX CHOLA GRANDEUR

TEXT: JAYANTHI MAHALINGAM ◆ ART: GOUTAM SEN

perfect symmetry. The octagonal *shikhara* rests on a single block of granite weighing almost 80 tonnes. It is said that the stone was lifted up with the help of an inclined scaffolding stretching from the top of the temple to Vayalur, a village 6 km away! The giant monolithic Nandi or bull is housed in its own *mandapam*. It weighs around 25 tonnes and is about 3.6 m high and 6 m long. The *shivalingam* is immense, measuring more than 3 m in height and set in a two-storeyed sanctum. The priests have to climb a ladder to perform the *abhisheka*! Beautiful murals adorn the long pillared corridors surrounding the temple. The exterior and interior walls of the sanctum are covered with marvellous sculptured friezes depicting the 108 Bharata Natyam poses, incidents from the lives of the Nayanmars, and Shiva in his various manifestations.

The Periya Nayakidevi shrine was built within the temple's precincts by the Pandyas who ruled here after the Cholas for about 50 years.

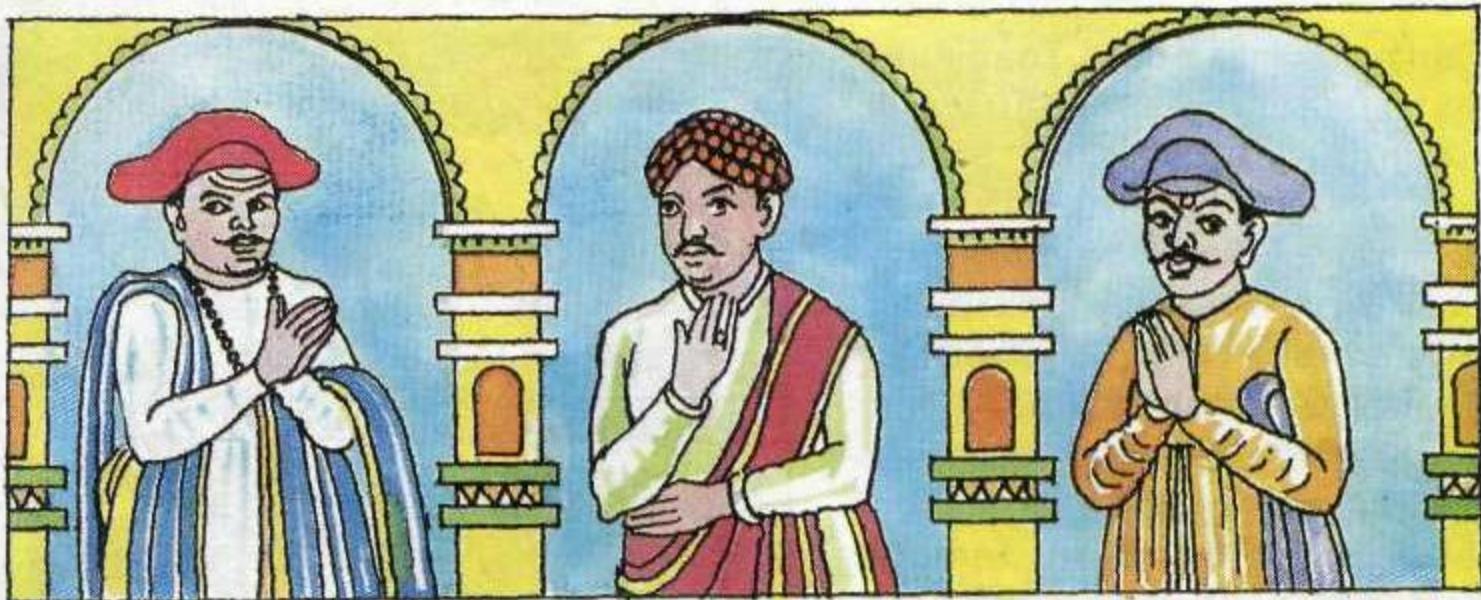




A painting of the Tanjore school his independence and had himself crowned king in 1674, the same year as Shivaji! The Thanjavur Marathas ruled till the end of the 18th century, when they were pensioned off by the English. They added to the already-rich cultural history of the city, especially Tulsaji and his son Serfoji II, who acceded to the throne in 1798. The latter was educated by a Danish Protestant missionary from Tarangambadi (Tranquebar) and showed a scholarly bent from childhood. He single-handedly built up the palace library collection, employing scholars to buy and copy large numbers of manuscripts from centres of learning all over India. The Saraswati Mahal library today is home to over 22,000 valuable works in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Persian, Urdu and a few European languages as well. They cover a range of subjects, from medicine to grammar. A small museum houses the curiosities collected by Serfoji. An eight-storeyed tower in a corner of the palace, and a Ganesha shrine and Nataraja mandapam in the Brihadeesvara complex, are other contributions made by this enlightened ruler.

Malik Khafur, the dreaded general of Alauddin Khilji, captured the Kaveri delta for the Sultan. However, In 1377, Kampanna, the son of the Vijayanagara ruler Bukka, overthrew the Muslim sultanate in Madurai. Thereafter, for the next 200 years, the Nayaka rulers who owed allegiance to Vijayanagara, ruled the delta. The Nayakas built a magnificent palace in Thanjavur. Raghunatha Nayaka (1600-34), a great patron of literature and music, probably started the collection of palm-leaf manuscripts in the palace library.

How the Marathas came to rule Thanjavur makes an interesting story. With the fall of the Vijayanagara empire, Thanjavur came under the rule of the Sultan of Bijapur. The Sultan offered the Thanjavur *jagir* to Shahaji, the Maratha noble in his court. After Shahaji, the *jagir* was inherited by his son Venkoji or Ekoji, stepbrother of legendary Maratha hero Shivaji. When the Bijapur sultanate declined, Ekoji declared



Ponniah, Vadivelu and Chinniah, three brothers of the Tanjore quartet

Both the Cholas and the Marathas were connoisseurs of music and dance. The Maratha kings had some 360 musical experts attached to the court. The kings themselves are credited with many compositions. Bharata Natyam, the classical dance form based on Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra*, was first performed by the *devadasis* or the 400-odd temple dancers, who were given quarters in the streets around the Brihadeesvara temple right from Rajaraja's time. It was then known as *sadirattam* or *dasiattam*.

In the early 19th century, the famed Tanjore Quartet gave this tradition of *sadir nritya* its definite shape and established it as a classical dance form. The Tanjore Quartet, which consisted of four brothers, Ponniah, Chinniah, Sivanandan and Vadivelu, revolutionised Bharata Natyam and popularised it far beyond Thanjavur. They initially trained in music under the renowned Carnatic composer Muthuswami Dikshithar.

Tamil culture reached its pinnacle in Thanjavur, and not only in music and dance. The Tanjore school of painting, with its emphasis on bold lines and delicate colours inlaid with glass and semi-precious gems and embellished with gold leaf, has its admirers everywhere. And even today, classical Carnatic instrumentalists swear by the *veenas*, *mridangams* and *tamburas* manufactured in Thanjavur.

The greatest doyens of Carnatic music were born in Tiruvarur, located a few

Maharaja Serfoji II



kilometres away from Thanjavur city. Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri were contemporaries. Thyagaraja was the crowning glory of this musical trinity. Thyagaraja later moved to Tiruvaiyaru, situated at the confluence of four tributaries and the Kaveri. The presiding deity of the beautiful temple here is Panchanadeeswara, or the Lord of the Five Rivers. Every year, in April and May, the deity is carried on a palanquin in a procession which starts from Tiruvaiyaru. It covers the six other villages of Tirupazhanam, Tiruchotruthurai, Tiruvenugudi, Tirukandayur, Tirupoonthuruthi and Thillaisthanam. The crowds following the palanquin sing and dance throughout the night and sleep on the sands of the exposed river bed. Thyagaraja lived all his life in Tiruvaiyaru. He was a devotee of Sri Rama and composed in Telugu, his mother tongue and in Sanskrit. To him music and *bhakti* or devotion to God, merged in one melodious stream, sweeping all before it.

Thyagaraja's elder brother did not approve of what he thought was a lazy existence. One day, he threw the idol of Rama that Thyagaraja worshipped daily, into the river. The poet was seized with an agony of grief. He ran to the riverside and entreated Rama with many a heart-rending song, begging Him to come back. And, lo! The idol surfaced, borne on the gentle bosom of Kaveri! Legend has it that the idol of Rama seen in the *samadhi* today is the same one.

Thyagaraja's *samadhi* is located on the banks of the river in Tiruvaiyaru. It was restored by the well-known singer Bangalore Nagarathnamma in the 1920's. Every January, thousands of Carnatic music-lovers gather here for the *aradhana* festival, when the idol of the saint-composer is ritually bathed and worshipped. The 'five gems' or *Pancharatna keerthanas* of Thyagaraja are sung and played by a select group of eminent musicians. It is a never-to-be-forgotten experience, as the beautiful melodies rise, fall and mingle with the burbling of the Kaveri, which is full to overflowing at this time of the year.



Thyagaraja, the great saint-composer

## CURSE OF THE PHARAOH?

The car George Edward Stanhope Molyneauz Herbert, the fifth Earl of Carnarvon, and owner of a sprawling estate in West Hampshire, England, was driving one day in 1901, overturned. He was injured in the chest and he developed a breathing problem. His doctor suggested that it would do him good if he spent the winter somewhere warmer and more dry. So Lord Carnarvon, as he was popularly known, went to Egypt and stayed in Luxor in the close proximity of the Valley of Kings.

By and by there grew in him a deep fascination for the great antiquities of this ancient land on the banks of River Nile. Year after year, during the colder months he returned to Egypt and got himself keenly interested in archaeology. In 1907, he met Howard Carter, a young professional archaeologist and Egyptologist and took him as his advisor and associate to unearth

## UNSOLVED

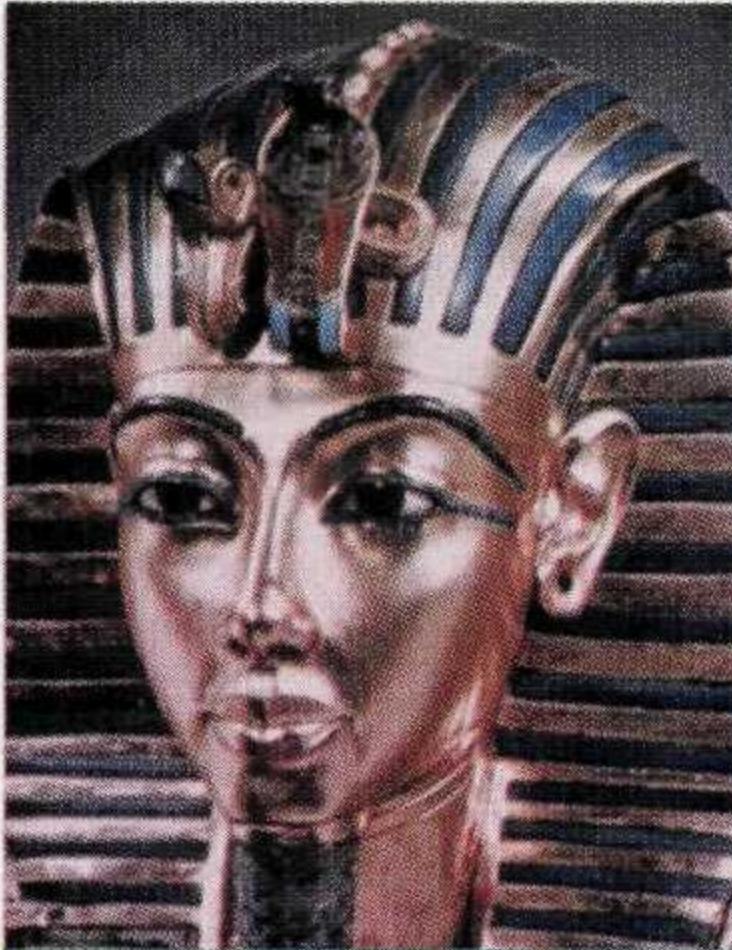
## MYSTERIES

the forgotten tombs of the Pharaohs and their priceless treasures.

So, under the patronage of Lord Carnarvon, Carter carried on in earnest the excavations for 15 long years and throughout the upheavals of World War I. But alas, he met with little success and his patron was on the point of calling off the project. The zealous Carter managed to persuade Lord Carnarvon

to allow him another season of digging. Perhaps, in celebration that his wish was fulfilled, he bought himself a canary and headed for Luxor. His Egyptian labourers told him that his fellow singing pet would indeed bring him luck.

On November 1, 1922 began the excavation of the last untouched



Note the image of the cobra on the Pharaoh's head-dress



portion of the Valley Of Kings, a triangle covering an area of two-and-a-half acres. On November 4 was discovered a sunken stairway entrance which led to a sealed tomb deep below. At once, a message was sent to Lord Carnarvon who came from England accompanied by his daughter. Finally, on November 26 the rubble was cleared and the doorway was broken open. Carter peered in a first and saw some "wonderful things". Carnarvon sent a report to the papers saying: "There are some marvellous objects here!"

Indeed, what was being unravelled was not only wonderful and marvellous but much more. The tomb of the youthful Pharaoh Tutankhamun and all its treasures that were stored up to guarantee the king's well-being in his after-life. Tutankhamun is said to have been crowned when he was barely twelve years old and, and after reigning for about six years, he died at the age of eighteen. The sepulchral chamber was opened on February 17, 1923 and the actual sarcophagus was unearthed on January 3, 1924. The king's mummy lay within three confines which fit inside one in the other. The innermost was of solid gold and the outer ones were of gold inlaid on wooden frames. On the king's face was a magnificent portrait mask of pure gold.

Tutankhamun was neither an

important king, nor a successful one. But he has come to be known as the most famous Pharaoh because of the discovery of his incredible tomb and the bizarre happenings that followed it.

On the day the tomb was opened, Carter's pet, the yellow little canary, was swallowed up by a cobra which had found its way to the bird's cage. The local Egyptian workers said, as the king's tomb had been opened and the royalty was protected by the cobra, whose image adorns the front of the royal head-dress, there might be a death soon.

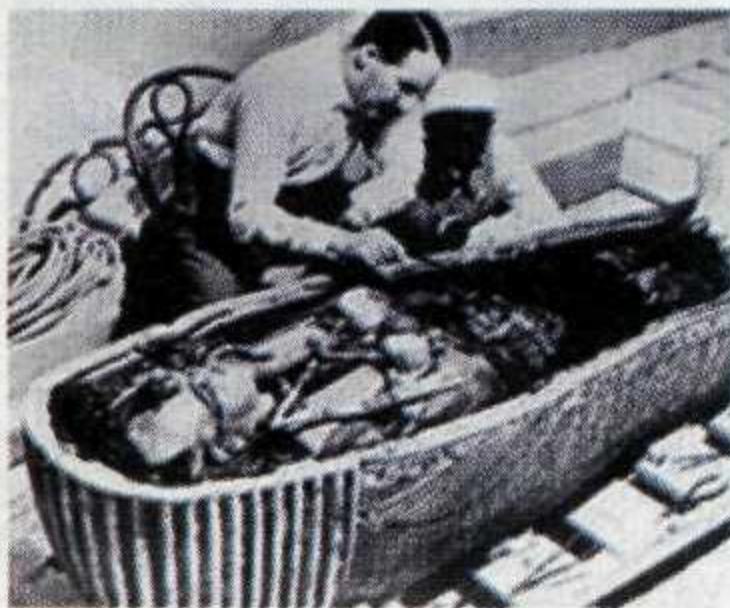
Strangely, Lord Carnarvon fell ill. He looked pale, his teeth fell out, he suffered from a fever that came and went and, finally, at 2 a.m. on April 5, he breathed his last in Cairo at the age of 57. At that very moment, the entire city of Cairo was plunged in darkness for a short time and no one could explain the reason for that complete blackout. More astounding was the fact that back in England, at that very instant, Carnarvon's pet fox-terrier, Susan, began to howl and then died.

Above the entrance to the tomb of Tutankhamun, a hieroglyphics was deciphered thus: "Death shall come to him who touches the tomb," Another warning has also come to light within the sepulchre which says: "Death will slay with wings whoever disturbeth the peace of the Pharaohs." Is it possible



that the curse of the king long dead is actually true? Lord Carnarvon's son had reportedly admitted that shortly after the death of his father, he was visited by a strange woman who warned him not to go near his father's grave. He has never done so.

Some other archaeologists and tourists who visited the tomb of Tutankhamun had been either taken ill or died in unusual circumstances. Professor La Fleur paid a visit to the



sepulchre on his first day in Luxor and died that very night in his hotel room. George Jay-Gould, an American multi-millionaire, suddenly developed fever and died the very day he visited the tomb. In 1926, the British nurse who had attended on Lord Carnarvon in Cairo most unexpectedly died at childbirth at the age of 28. One of the assistants of Carter, A.C. Mace, quit his job in 1924 after attacks of fever and died in 1928. Another assistant, Richard Bethell, also suffered from

fever and circulatory complications and died soon after.

Scientists and researchers have suggested that fungus that covered the walls of the tomb could have started some sort of fatal allergy or infection. Or could it be that the ancient Egyptians had used their knowledge of poisons to protect the secrets of their kings?

Dr. Gamaled-Din Mehrez, Director of the Department of Antiquities, who had accompanied King Tutankhamun's relics for two major exhibitions, has been recorded to have said: "Look at me. All my life I've been involved with tombs and mummies. I'm surely the best proof that it is all coincidence." Imagine, just four weeks later, he just dropped dead most unexpectedly at the age of 52.

A television film, "*The Curse of King Tut*", was being made in 1980. On the very first day of shooting in Egypt, the hero fractured his leg at ten places, when a vintage car went over the edge of a hill. He was replaced by another actor, but the other members of the team expressed their reluctance to cooperate in the production of the film.

Were these series of mishaps mere coincidences? Or were they truly the result of the ancient king's deadly curse?

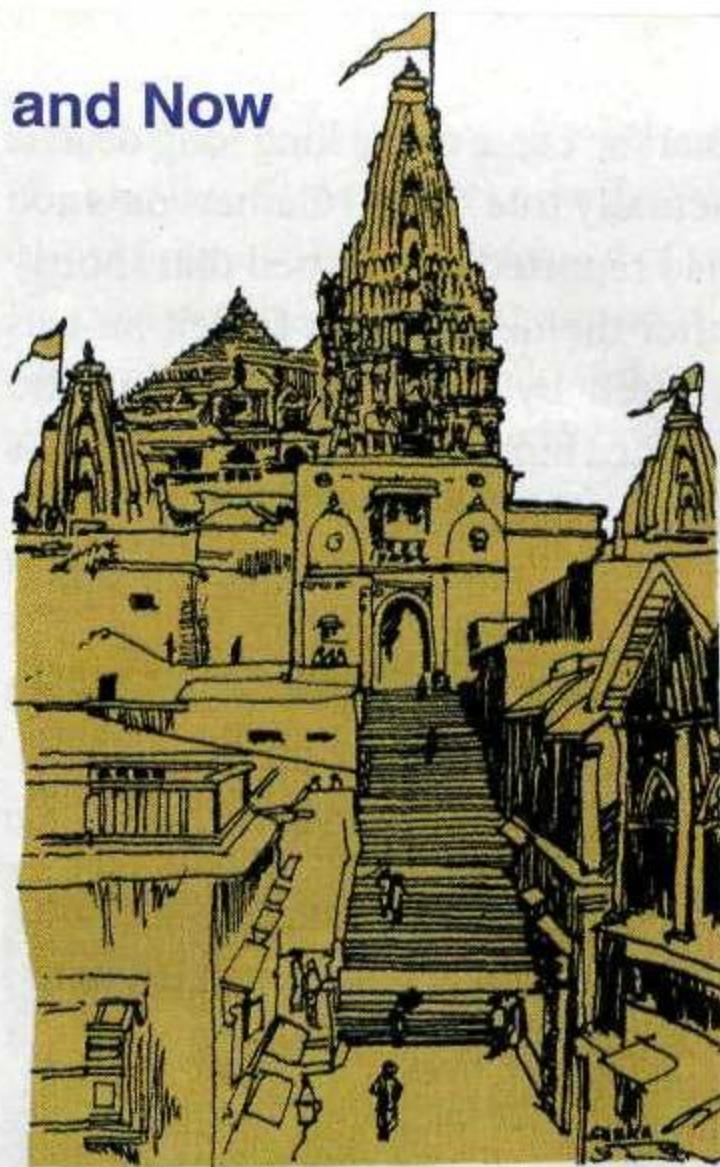


## DWARAKA

### TRANQUILLITY OF THE PAST

One of the legendary sites in India is Dwaraka, in Gujarat, a city believed to have been founded by none other than Sri Krishna. It was known as Dwaravati. A still older name was Kusasthali. Legend says that as Sri Krishna needed a larger area for his capital, the sea receded yielding him the necessary land. After Sri Krishna's passing away, the sea reclaimed the land. That is to say, a part of Dwaraka was submerged. But the sea left the area which was within the fort of Sri Krishna. Known as Vet Dwaraka, this area remains an island.

Excavations near Vet Dwaraka have proved beyond doubt that the place had been a prosperous town many centuries ago. The present Dwaraka is the sixth town to have been built over the ruins of five earlier habitations. Mythology stresses its origin even to pre-Krishna days.



Tradition counts it among the seven sacred cities of India, the other six being Ayodhya, Mathura, Ujjaini, Varanasi, Haridwar, and Kanchipuram.

The sage Shankaracharya founded four maths or monasteries at four holy places of India: Badarikashram in the far north, Shringeri in the south, Puri in the east, and Dwaraka in the west. The Shankara Math at Dwaraka is adjacent to the city's greatest attraction, the Dwarakadish temple. It houses the idol of Sri Krishna as the monarch of Dwaraka.

Situated on the banks of the





*The wise dedicate their lives and wealth for the welfare of others because they know these things shall never last.*

—Kautilya

Gomati, the original temple was founded by Vajranabha, the great grandson of Sri Krishna. The present structure built by Raja Jagat Singh Rathore is impressive and is thronged by thousands of devotees every day. While Sri Krishna's palace was situated at Vet Dwaraka, the site of the temple is believed to have been the place here he discharged his stately duties.

The idol is simply charming. Meerabai, the queen of Mewar (Chitorgarh), is believed to have merged with this idol, in the year 1546.

On the south of the temple flows the river Gomati. As many as 56 steps from the temple lead one to the quiet river which, it is said, is secretly linked with the sacred Ganga.

About 2 km away from this great temple is to be seen a shrine dedicated to Devi Rukmini, the consort of Sri Krishna. There is also an ancient Siva temple, known as Nageswar Mahadeo Tirth. Not far from it is a hallowed lake. Sri Krishna's childhood playmates, the Gopis of Brindavan, had camped on

their visit to Dwaraka to meet the apple of their eye - Sri Krishna. Dwaraka remains steeped in the memories of the past — of those from Lord Krishna to Shankaracharya and Meerabai.

Even though some modern industries have been established close to the city, Dwaraka is still one of those few cities which remain tranquil. No doubt, all the means of modern life-style are there, but what dominates the atmosphere is a glorious past.



## A MEMORABLE EXCHANGE



*Friendship signed and sealed after a renewal, re-thinking, and re-appraisal*

By the time you read this, President Clinton's visit to India would have become history. The event received unusually wide publicity. Months before the President's visit, newspapers in India carried some news or comment about it almost every day. Leaders of every political party had something to say about it.

Why was the American President's visit so important? Is it because America

is a powerful country? That may be one of the reasons. But a far greater reason is, the USA champions democratic values and India is the world's largest democracy.

India was divided in 1947 and Pakistan came into being. But, for the greater part of time, Pakistan had been ruled by dictators. Pakistan could not retain its unity and Bangladesh was born through terrible bloodshed. For the



people of Pakistan, democracy has been more a dream than a reality. Now, too, the country is ruled by a military dictator and the leader who was a democratically elected Prime Minister is under arrest. Even then, the American President stopped in Pakistan for a few hours. Many people thought that he should not have done so, for that might encourage the army dictator. Others looked at it differently. The fact that the President spent only a few hours there, while he spent five days in India, showed that it was a mere courtesy stop-over.

But the situation was different earlier. There was that super power, the Soviet Union, which was America's arch-rival. Since India was friendly with the Soviet Union, America felt it necessary to appease Pakistan. This situation had changed. The arch-rival is no longer there. America has no special reason to pretend too much love for Pakistan. On the other hand, there are people in America who appreciate India's capacity to sustain its huge and complex democratic set up. They also know that India had great possibilities to develop as a great power. They would like a lasting friendship to bind the two nations.

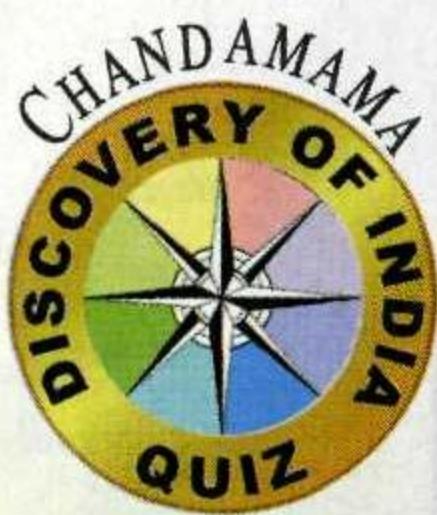
We all know the warm reception



*He came,  
he saw,  
and was  
conquered!*

President Clinton received in India. However, the concrete outcome of his visit would become clear only in the next few days. Even during his stay in India, Pakistan-instigated militants demonstrated their dastardly nature by doing a massacre of innocent Sikhs offering prayers at Gurudwaras in Kashmir. It is high time America should clearly appreciate the constructive work India is doing and the mad destructive misadventure in which other forces busy themselves.





## ENRICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Answers of this quiz will appear in the June issue. Meanwhile, try to find the answers yourself and enrich your knowledge of India's antiquity and heritage.

1



"Numerous people are seen departing to the abode of the god of Death, every day. Yet those who are alive conduct themselves as if they are immortals. What can be more surprising than this?"

Who said this, when, and why?

2

How are the following pairs of mythological characters related to each other?

(a) Sakuni	—	Gandhara
(b) Kesari	—	Mahamera
(c) Sahadev	—	Mahismati
(d) Bharata	—	Kekaya
(e) Valmiki	—	Tamasa



# Towards Better English

C'MON, LET'S CLAP!



## WHY KEEP MUM?

Reader Jyotiranjan Biswal of Durgapur wants to know the meaning of "It takes to tango".

The correct expression is "it takes two to tango". Tango is a popular dance in South American countries. The dance is meant for two persons – usually a couple – and it has an unusually very strong rhythm. A nearly similar expression is - "it takes two to clap", meaning it needs two hands or two persons to sound a clap. The larger meaning is, one person cannot remain silent when another is carrying on the argument while they try to find a solution to a problem.

Mr. Biswal also wants to know the meaning of the idiom "to take somebody's medicine like a man".

Again the correct expression is "to take *one's* medicine". This means to undergo or accept punishment, especially as a result of one's own actions. We normally say: He took his medicine like a man – without any hesitation, with courage. When you are ill, you don't take somebody else's medicine, do you?

Who is a "journeyman actor"? asks reader Shyamali Gupta of Lucknow.

A journeyman is one who learns a trade and goes to work for another, instead of working on his own—which indicates that he is just average or mediocre in his trade. Such a person is hired for work for a day or for a limited period. He thus journeys from one job to another, doing servile work.

Reader Narayana Rowther of Cuddalore wants to know the meaning of the expression "a parson's nose".

A more common expression is "Pope's nose". The fleshy part of a bird's tail, after cooking, is generally compared to a parson's nose! It is a slang and not frequently used in written literature, but only heard in conversation.



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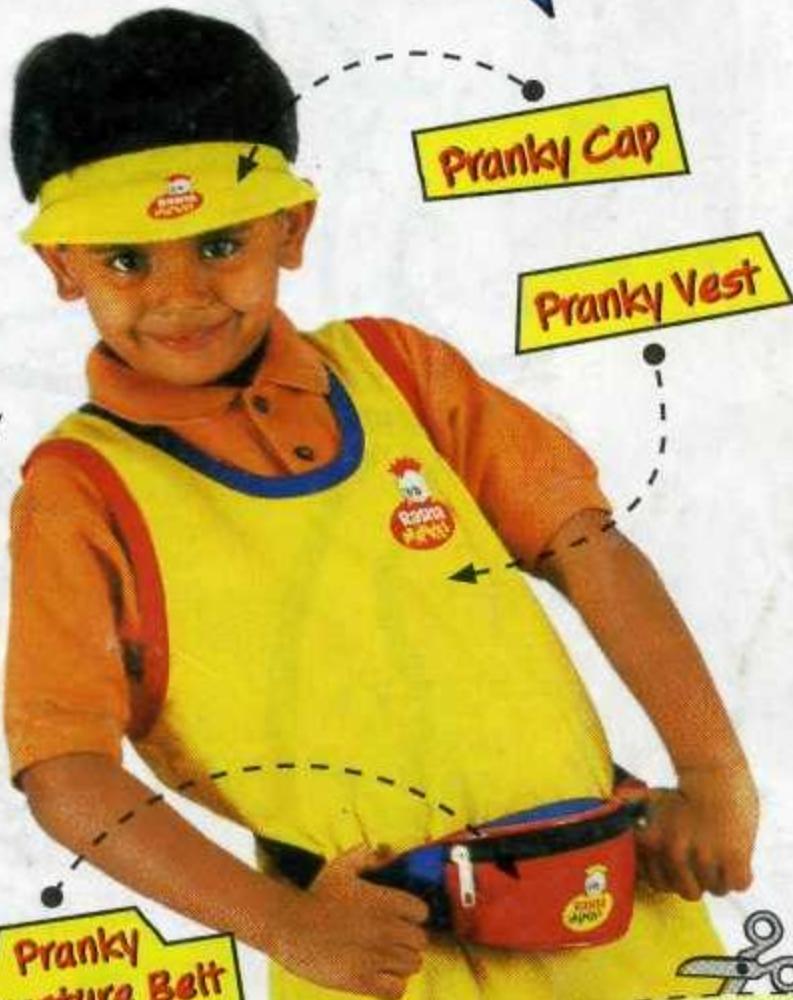
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